

S E R M O N S

ON

DIFFERENT SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE REVEREND

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DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

BY THE AUTHOR

JOHN FORTIN D.D.

Author of "The History of the Church of England,"
in the last and new edition.

THE NEW EDITION

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CHARLES H. IV.

MAY 15, 1767. APRIL 29, 1768. MAY 9, 1770.

The Use and Importance of Ecclesiastical

Theology.

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MATT. xxviii. 19.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

THE religion of our Saviour is simple, pure, and spiritual, and not encumbered with ceremonies; for all such rites and ordinances he abolished, appointing only two, baptism and the communion, both of them plain, easy, and significant, and which had in them nothing that could seem strange either to Jews or Gentiles.

Baptism is a religious rite, which was generally practised before our Saviour instituted it; for the Gentiles, in their solemn acts of devo-

tion, made use of sprinklings and ablutions, and the Jews baptized all profelytes to the religion. Our Lord, in like manner, appointed this ceremony as an admission into his service, and a public acknowledgment from the admitted persons that they would be his disciples, and own him for their Lord and Master.

To explain this part of our religion we must consider,

I. What that belief is which qualifies persons for baptism.

II. What is the end and design of baptism.

III. What is meant by being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

IV. How baptism is to be performed.

V. Who are the persons that ought to be baptized.

I. What is the belief which was required of those who were to be baptized; and which consequently is required of all who have been baptized?

Teach and baptize all nations, says our Lord; He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Now this faith, or believing, means no less than the whole duty of a Christian, namely, receiving and obeying the gospel.

S E R M O N I. 3.

Since this belief is declared to be necessary to salvation, it is evident that, as it relates to knowledge, and to an assent of the mind to certain doctrines, it must be something plain and obvious. It is impossible that God should make any thing necessary to our salvation which we are not made capable of knowing and understanding. The doctrine therefore of the gospel cannot be a matter of intricacy and difficulty, of deep and abstruse speculation, which requires learning and subtilty to apprehend; but it is a doctrine of practice, of virtue and righteousness, proposed as necessary to be embraced by all men alike. Degrees of natural abilities there are, and degrees of opportunity to receive instruction, and consequently there must be degrees of knowledge; but the things needful, the things promised at baptism, these must be equally intelligible by all. There are various doctrines which are occasionally delivered in the scriptures, and various points which are discussed, and various mistakes which are censured; and these are very proper to be explained, and are useful for particular cases, but not necessary to be studied and remembered by every Christian. Every thing that is true is not therefore fit to be made

an article of faith; much less are the interpretations of frail and fallible men to be thus dignified and distinguished. On the contrary, it behoves the teachers of the gospel to separate them from the genuine and unadulterated word of God, and to remove the chaff from the wheat.

And as these things which are to be believed are plain, so because faith should be founded upon evidence, the main proofs of our religion are also plain. Of these the more obvious are the miracles wrought by our Saviour and his apostles, and the intrinsic excellence of the gospel, which tends so manifestly to promote all righteousness, and to make men good and happy. To these may be added some of the predictions both in the Old and New Testament, which have been most evidently accomplished.

This is the reason for which unbelief is represented in scripture as a most heinous crime; because they who then rejected a religion so simple, so useful, and so amiable, preached by Christ and his apostles, and confirmed by so many signs and wonders, must have rejected it through mere carelessness, wantonness, obstinacy, and impiety, from the worst of motives, and so could have no excuse. Go,

said

said our Lord to his apostles, Go and preach my gospel to all people. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.

The matters of belief which concern all Christians are briefly summed up in the baptismal creed, called the Apostles Creed. We are to believe in God the Father Almighty, who gave his only begotten Son, our Lord, to redeem us and instruct us, and who promiseth such assistance of his Holy Spirit as is needful for us in all our exigences; and we are to expect a resurrection, and a future judgment.

The design of this belief is to produce obedience, to make us live, as St. Paul briefly sums it up, soberly, righteously, and piously; soberly as to ourselves, righteously as to our neighbour, and piously as to God.

Moreover, as the religion delivered by our Saviour is contained in the New Testament, Christians should use their best endeavours to inform themselves of it, as it is there laid down.

And as Christianity is manifestly a religion formed for society, as well as for individuals, hence ariseth the duty of worshipping God in

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public with other Christians, and of acting as visible members of the church of Christ.

One reason for which our Saviour so strictly required that they who were converted by his disciples should be baptized, seems to have been this: His design was to collect and form a religious society or church; and therefore it was not sufficient for men to receive his gospel if they concealed their faith and kept it to themselves. They were to enter into his church, by baptism, openly and in the face of the world, and afterwards to continue in the open profession of their religion. With a view to this he said also; Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, shall deny me, shall not confess me before men, I will disown him before my Father.

With the same design he seems to have declared to Nicodemus the necessity of entering by baptism into the kingdom of the Messiah. Nicodemus, who believed him to be a prophet, and, probably, the Messiah who was to come, visited him by night, for fear of the Jews. Afterwards he declared his esteem for Christ more openly, by assisting at his funeral. After his resurrection, it is very reasonable to suppose, as some old traditions report, that he was baptized by the apostles, and joined himself to them.

II. The

II. The second thing to be considered is, the end and design of baptism; and that is amendment and improvement. St. Paul says; Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life. He describes Christ as sanctifying and cleansing his church with the washing of water by the word; and, speaking of Christians, he puts washed, sanctified, justified, as words importing the same thing; the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost, whereby our bodies are washed with pure water, and our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. And St. Peter says, that the baptism which saves us is not barely the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.

In these expressions there is an allusion to the ceremonies that were used in baptism, and to the moral sense of them, to the signs and to the things signified.

A person, when he was to be baptized, put off his clothes. This, as St. Paul observes, repre-

sents the putting off the body of sin, every disorderly and vicious affection. He then descended into the water, and stooped or lay down in it; this represents death and the grave; the literal death of Christ, undergone for our sakes, and the figurative death of every Christian, a death to sin, and to the vain and wicked world. His being washed in the water was a significant figure of repentance, of purity, and of being cleansed from all iniquity. His ascending from the water, under which he had been hidden, represented the resurrection of Christ for our justification, and the new life and second birth of the baptized person, who was thenceforward to live to God and to good works. And all this shews that the end and design of baptism is improvement, that repentance and righteousness is the sum and substance of Christianity, and that our religion is more a practical than a speculative duty.

As to the spiritual benefits of baptism, it is to be observed, that there is a twofold baptism; a baptism of the flesh, and a baptism of the mind. The first is an external sign and a visible testimony of the second; the second is the thing signified; the first is once performed; the second is permanent, and consists in faith and obedience;

obedience; and to these the favour and the blessing of God is annexed.

III. Let us consider what is meant by being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

In the language of the scriptures, to be baptized in the name of any person is to acknowledge such a person as a master or teacher, and to declare one's self his disciple. They therefore who were converted to the belief and profession of the gospel, were baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: that is, they made by that act a solemn profession of receiving the doctrines, and of resolving to obey the precepts, of that religion which God revealed and taught by his Son, and confirmed by the miraculous testimony of his Holy Spirit.

Almighty God is our Father and Creator: Christ is our Saviour, our Lord, our Mediator, the revealer of the will of God to us, and by him appointed to be our Judge at the last day: the Holy Ghost is sent forth by our Lord to sanctify his church, and to assist his servants in all exigences, if they qualify themselves to receive his assistance, by endeavours to do well, and be careful not to grieve him by their iniquities,

quities, and compel him to withdraw himself from them.

IV. Our fourth inquiry is, How baptism is to be performed?

At the beginning it seems to have been performed usually, but perhaps not always, by being plunged into the water. The Christian world hath changed this practice for that of sprinkling or pouring water on the face; some few persons excepted, who not only contend for retaining the ancient method of dipping, but hold it to be of absolute necessity, and will not allow those who have been sprinkled, to be truly baptized, or to be members of the church of Christ.

But in this they appear to be superstitious, and ignorant of the true nature of ceremonies, and the difference between moral and ritual ordinances. Moral laws are the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; they are immutable and eternal, and admit of no variety or relaxation: but ritual laws, which are made sacred only by appointment, are capable of suspension, or alteration; and when, by a concurrence of circumstances, they become impracticable, or extremely inconvenient, it is to be supposed that the rigour and the letter of
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the law yields to the intention of the Law-giver, which was not to burden and distress any one by minute and scrupulous ordinances. So it was, with respect to the Jews, in the law of the Sabbath, of the annual feasts, of sacrifices, and, in general, of rites and ceremonies; and, by parity of reason, so it ought to be in the two ritual precepts of Christianity, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism was at first instituted in mild or hot climates, where bathing and washing the body was a general practice. Afterwards, in northern climes and colder countries, it was judged to be troublesome and dangerous; and so, by degrees, pouring or sprinkling was introduced in its stead. And so long as water was used, and the baptismal form in the New Testament was repeated, and the ceremony was performed with decency, piety, and solemnity, every thing that is truly essential may be deemed to be observed. Thus may ritual precepts be taken with a sober and reasonable latitude, and not urged with a pharisaical preciseness and superstition.

Baptism was required by our Lord from all those, at least, who were arrived to years of discretion, and to whom the gospel was preached. He that believeth, says he, and is baptized

baptized shall be saved. This is full and strong; and yet even this by wise and good men hath been supposed to admit of exceptions. For example, In the first ages of Christianity, and in times of persecution, it sometimes happened that pagans of good dispositions, converted and animated by the constancy of Christian martyrs, openly declared themselves to be Christians, and were immediately seized by the pagans, and hurried away to death. Now in this case, it was the unanimous opinion of the primitive church that martyrdom supplied the want of baptism, and that such persons were baptized in their own blood, and true servants of Christ, and entitled to all the rewards promised by him to his faithful followers. And indeed Christ himself calls his sufferings and his death his baptism.

V. The last point which we proposed to consider is, Who the persons are that ought to be baptized?

Amongst those who are arrived to the age of discretion, and are then made acquainted with Christianity, it must be first, those who are willing; for our Saviour never compelled any to become his disciples. Ecclesiastical history will furnish us with too many instances of
Jews,

Jews, and pagans, who have been compelled to receive baptism by mere violence and oppression. But all such methods of making false proselytes are detestable, and the exploits of false Christians. Secondly, They only are qualified for baptism who condemn their past transgressions, and believe in Christ, with a resolution to act suitably to this persuasion. What that belief is we have already considered under our first head of discourse. But the point which I now propose to examine is, at what age persons may be admitted to baptism. It is now the common practice of the Christian world, and it hath been so for many ages past, to admit children to baptism. But there are, and there have been, persons of another mind, who have thought that none should be baptized except those who are capable of answering for themselves; and this is a subject of controversy, on which learned and good men have been divided. Our opposers in this question have so much to say for themselves, that they should not be condemned by us for acting according to their serious and best judgment, or treated as stubborn and contentious persons. But then it becomes them to judge as fairly and favourably of us, who have as much to say for

for ourselves as they and I think, have somewhat more than they. The subject is copious, and I must contract it into a few words as I can possibly, and just sketch out to you the principal arguments for infant-baptism.

The general practice of the church from the fourth century to this day, for fourteen hundred years, will be deemed I suppose, an argument of some force, and it was necessary to mention it; but I shall not lay much stress upon it. I proceed to other considerations.

Our Saviour commanded his disciples to instruct and to baptize persons of all nations; and accordingly we read that they baptized their converts, them and their families, or their whole house. This is all that we can learn from the sacred writers; and from this we cannot determine with certainty whether infant-baptism was or was not practised at the beginning.

Let us then consider what the law of nature and the laws of nations teach concerning a state of infancy.

In all civilized societies, parents have ever been allowed to covenant for their children as well as for themselves; and children, before they arrive to years of discretion, are entitled to va-

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rious advantages and privileges; they are part of the community, and treated as such. Since then infants are subjects of the state, and members of civil society, by the same reason they may be members of religious society, and incorporated into the visible church of Christ.

Secondly; The Christian religion, as to form and discipline, is partly built upon the Jewish religion, and upon the practice of the synagogue. The scheme of ecclesiastical government, the office of bishops or presbyters, and deacons, the two sacraments, and the public worship of God, are founded in some degree upon the Jewish model. So that a knowledge of the Old Testament, of the law of Moses, and of Jewish antiquities, is requisite for an accurate and learned knowledge of the gospel. Baptism is taken from the practice of the Jews, who used to baptize their proselytes, and it is substituted in the place of circumcision.

It appears from ancient testimonies, that when the Jews made proselytes, they used to baptize the new convert, with his whole family, infants as well as adults; and hence it is reasonable to conclude that the apostles followed this custom, as they had no precept from Christ to the contrary.

Circumcision

Circumcision was a ceremony of initiation, by which the Jews entered into a covenant with God. It was appointed to Abraham, and his children, and his servants; and to his posterity from Isaac. Infants were thus received into covenant before they could give consent and make promises for themselves; and a child by this rite became a disciple of Moses, a member of the Jewish church, a subject to the law, an inheritor of God's promises, and a partaker of his covenant.

Since then circumcision was repealed by the gospel, and baptism was instituted in its place, and since, in the nature of the thing, an infant under the gospel is as capable of being a Christian, as he was under the law of being a Jew, the lawfulness, at least, of infant-baptism appears evident from this entire likeness of circumstances.

Thirdly, God permitted the Jews to make vows in the name of their children, which these children were bound afterwards to perform, and to dedicate them to his particular service; as he commanded them to bring up their children in the true religion. And all this is founded partly upon paternal authority, and upon the supposition that a parent may

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may contract and covenant for his child, in all things that are to the child's interest and advantage. Thus the prophet Samuel was vowed and given by his parents to serve God in the tabernacle, under the high-priest, and God approved of the gift and accepted the child. By the same paternal authority, and for the same reasons, a parent may present and offer his child to Jesus Christ to be his servant. The question is whether Christ will accept the gift.

When young children were brought to him, that he might bless them, and the disciples were displeased at it, he rebuked them, and gave the infants his benediction. No Christian will say that the prayers and the blessing of Christ were of no value; and from the reason of the thing it seems as proper that an infant should be baptized in the name of Christ, as that he should be brought to be blessed by him. To the question therefore which we have put, our Lord seems to return this answer; Suffer the child to come to me.

Fourthly, Since baptism is appointed in general terms, and infants are neither expressly named, nor expressly excluded, it seems best, all things duly considered, rather to admit

them to a covenant which cannot be prejudicial to them, than, by refusing them, to run the risk of acting contrary to the design of the precept.

Lastly, As infants give their consent by proxy, this makes the ensuing ceremony of confirmation very expedient and proper, though indeed it be not of divine appointment. For by it young persons, who are of age to answer for themselves, do by an open and a solemn act renew and ratify their baptismal vow, and take upon themselves in a voluntary manner the Christian profession, and declare their resolution to live and die in it, by the grace of God. Upon which they are recommended to the divine favour by the prayers of the congregation, and by the ministry of those whom our church hath appointed to perform the office.

It is fit therefore that persons who are to be confirmed should first consider with themselves what it is that they undertake: for who would sign a bond without knowing the contents? Of this, the office of baptism, and the office of confirmation, and the apostles creed, and the catechism, which are in our liturgy, will sufficiently inform them.

As

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As there is only one baptism appointed in the New Testament, which is not to be repeated, so the church hath appointed only one confirmation; to remind Christians that having once dedicated themselves to the service of Christ, they must not draw back, and become the servants of sin; and that, if they do so, these methods of procuring the favour of God are never more to be obtained.

In the times of the apostles, Christian converts were immediately received into the Church by baptism, and all their former transgressions, in the days of their ignorance, were forgiven, upon their repentance and resolution to become new creatures, and to live thenceforwards according to the rules of the gospel.

If they relapsed into evil courses, their case was considered as extremely dangerous, and it was not without much difficulty, and a very solemn humiliation and repentance, that they were received again to Christian communion. Some sects of Christians there were, who excluded such repenting sinners from a re-admission; but this practice was generally condemned as too rigid and uncharitable.

In process of time we find that several persons, for fear of losing the great privileges of baptism,

baptism, by sinning afterwards, used to defer their baptism to the time of old age, or of sickness, or of danger, and chose rather to run the risk of dying unbaptized, than of committing some heinous fault afterwards. This was mere folly; for the obligations to act according to their faith and knowledge were much the same, to those who already knew and believed the gospel, whether they were baptized or not; and the remission of sins granted to the converted Jews and pagans could be no proper motive to Christians to hope that they might sin with impunity by deferring their baptism.

But afterwards, as the necessity of an early baptism became more and more the received opinion, this practice of delaying it went out of use.

In ensuing ages, many corruptions crept into the church; and amongst them, the doctrine of pardons, absolutions, and indulgences, to be procured or purchased by those who had been greatly deficient in their Christian duty.

Notions too rigid, and notions too relaxed, in matters of practical religion must be equally avoided. Though Christians should be reminded that it is extremely dangerous to do evil under the light of the gospel, yet they
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should also be told that the gospel is a dispensation of mercy, and that repentance is always open to us, as a method of reconciliation for past offences, through the merits and intercession of our Redeemer. This is sufficient to exclude despair; as the danger of delaying this reformation ought to check all carelessness and presumption. A repentance after long offending, if it be sincere and active, hath been called a plank after a shipwreck. The expression is proper, and the image that it conveys is strong and striking. It teaches us how much better it is to avoid a shipwreck, than, after having suffered it, to seize upon a plank, and struggling with the utmost dangers and difficulties, to be so fortunate as at last to escape the devouring deep, and to gain the shore.

S E R M O N II.

PSALM cxlvi. 6.

Happy is he that bath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.

IT is a question of importance whether men are capable of happiness, or in what degree it may be attained.

When we reflect upon the wants, calamities, follies, passions, and weaknesses of human nature, a state of happiness seems not consistent with it. It looks like an amusing speculation, a pretty phantom, a creature of the imagination, which is no where realized and exemplified. All are agreed in desiring and in seeking it; but how do they seek it? It is often in so foolish a manner, as if they had projected before-hand to be disappointed.

If God alone be the author and giver of happiness, they who are enemies to him must be enemies to their own welfare; and they who pay him only outward worship can lay no sure foundation for peace with him, and with their own minds. Without goodness there can be no such thing as happiness, which must suppose such an inward composure and complacency as ariseth from a reasonable hope of the divine favour.

If men have lost the reins of self-government, it is impossible that they should find happiness, or any thing that approaches to it. Whilst unruly affections, extravagant desires, vain hopes and vain fears discompose the mind, to suppose happiness in such a state, is to suppose contradictions, to imagine light and darkness, health and sickness, storms and serenity united together. There may be an inward tranquillity whilst all is gloomy and stormy without, but there can be no degree of it when the mind itself is sick and sore, and wounded, and restless, and uneasy, and disturbed at every frivolous accident. So that if there be no effectual way to rectify these disorders, to subdue these domestic enemies, and to free the soul from the fever of lust or of anger,

anger, from jealousy, covetousness, envy, hatred, malice, revenge, fear and despondency, it is vain to think of introducing felicity into such a mind.

It is not enough towards producing happiness, that men are at certain times composed and quiet; for happiness should be a settled state, not liable to great and sudden changes; and complete happiness is an uniform and uninterrupted enjoyment of the greatest good of which our nature is capable. Less than this can suffice indeed, and ought to suffice to make us contented; but less than this is not to be called true felicity. Consequently no such condition is to be expected in our present changeable and imperfect state, even though we endeavour to perform our duty suitably to our station and abilities. Happiness in an high degree is not an inhabitant of this earth, nor made for man during the days of his mortality.

But since we are allowed to seek our portion of present happiness, if we seek it in a lawful way, let us consider what assistances we can procure to facilitate the pursuit.

Imagination conduces in some degree towards the comfort or uneasiness of life. There is this

this evidence of its influence, that the same person, under the same circumstances, shall think himself happy or unhappy by the different turn of fancy. If he fixes his thoughts wholly upon the dark side, and the melancholy prospect of worldly affairs in general, and of his own affairs in particular, and represents himself as in danger of undergoing all the probable or the possible evils of life; let these sad thoughts be uppermost in his mind, he cannot be happy, or even easy, though his condition upon the whole may be very tolerable. The same person at another time shall possess his mind in peace, when the clouds and vapours are dispersed which his gloomy imagination had raised up. It is certain that he who thinks himself miserable goes a great way towards making himself so. He therefore who would promote his own repose and satisfaction, must endeavour to draw his mind off from the fears of evils which may never happen, or which may be compensated by some advantages. He must submit to the dispensations of Providence in the things which befall him, and entertain himself with the lawful comforts of life which are within his reach, and depend upon the goodness of God for the time to come.

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This is the true art of living, and herein lies that portion of happiness which may be found here.

It is manifest that men often delude themselves by imagining that there is more happiness in the vanities and pleasures of the world than there really is. They pursue these things with all their strength, and happy are they when they obtain them. The imagination adorns, heightens, and improves them; and being thus for a time delighted and transported, they conclude themselves happy, and continue in this state of mind, as long as the delusion and the imposture continues, and no longer.

But though, for the present, it is better to have pleasing than to have frightful dreams, yet in reality and upon the whole it is the interest of every one not to be imposed upon either way, by cheerful or by melancholy mistakes and illusions; it is best to see things just as they are, and to judge of them according to their true nature and effects. Imagination is a good servant but a bad master; and we possess a power of an higher rank which ought to govern and not to obey; which

which we call understanding, or conscience, or reason, by which we should determine concerning good and evil.

As we have also senses excited by external objects, we are so formed as to be pleased when these objects make agreeable impressions upon us. The question then is whether we are to be guided in our choice merely by the pleasures which the senses afford, or whether there be not other and higher things than these to seek and to love, by extending our thoughts beyond the visible world, even to its all-perfect Author? Reason suggests that it is our chief interest to serve and please Him whose power, wisdom and goodness have no bounds, and who can make us truly and permanently happy or unhappy; that we ought to rely and depend upon him, to be thankful to him for all his benefits, and to pray to him for the relief of our wants. These fundamental duties of religion are the natural and genuine result of reason and consideration; and then it appears by consequence that we should prefer God, and the favour of God, and the service of God, to worldly objects; that we should employ things temporal as means

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to a sublimer end; that we should possess them with gratitude, and use them with caution and moderation; that we should bear no ill-will to those who are of the same nature with ourselves; that we should be just in our dealings, sober in our behaviour, kind to our neighbour, and charitable to objects of compassion.

These are some of the general directions which reason suggests with respect to God, to man, and to ourselves. Either then our happiness must depend upon the pleasures of the senses, which we have in common with the inferior rank of creatures, or upon the use of reason which distinguishes us from them. But the perfection of every being must lie in its best part; and as the perfection of beasts is to be found in those several qualities or instincts by which they answer the ends for which they are made, that of a man ariseth from his understanding duly cultivated and exercised.

If happiness requires contentment and satisfaction, we are to seek it in that which is most apt to produce the most lasting bliss. And we soon find that mere sensual pleasures

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end in uneasiness, that they are short, uncertain, unsatisfactory. On the contrary we find that the pleasures of a well-disposed mind, and of a good conscience, are of an abiding nature and always grateful to the inward taste, and have no such stings and bitter remorse as the violent pursuit of unlawful objects leaves behind it.

If perfect pleasure or felicity can be obtained by any thing in this world, it must be by natural, and moral, and social happiness.

Natural happiness consists in the possession of all things which are agreeable to the frame and constitution of our beings; in an healthful body, an easy and undisturbed mind, a competent subsistence, faithful friends, agreeable acquaintances, and useful occupations; for these things suit our nature, and we cannot continue to act the part of human creatures, without the means to preserve the union of soul and body, and to apply the one and the other to their proper functions.

I say then, there is no perfect happiness to be acquired in such a broken and disordered temper of mind and body as we often experience. A weak and infirm constitution labouring

bouring under diseases which by our utmost care we can neither prevent or remove, was never intended by Providence for a foundation of a happy state. Where there is neither health nor ease, all other comforts and conveniences lose their relish, and we are apt to grow weary of life, and to account it rather a burden to be endured, than an advantage to be esteemed. Here, however, a good mind becomes an assistance and a relief to the decays of the body, and teaches patience and submission to Divine Providence. But patience and submission is not complete happiness.

The scripture indeed speaks of rejoicing in tribulation, and accounting ourselves blessed when we either suffer directly for righteousness sake, or submit to inconveniences, or forego present advantages, to do that which is right and pleasing to God. But this joy is not the result of our present situation; it ariseth from the expectation of a future recompense; and therefore it is properly expressed by the apostle, when he exhorts believers to rejoice in hope; in hope, which is a different thing from possession, and looks forward to a time of retribution. And when the scripture speaks
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of that glorious state, it informs us that the human body will be wonderfully altered from its present condition. The principle of life will not then be such as it now is, and which stands in need of continual and sometimes troublesome repairs; but a far nobler flame will quicken the purified and spiritualized body, and not only preserve it from decay, corruption, and dissolution, but from all the uneasy effects which proceed from our inhabiting a mass of flesh and blood. Mortality will be swallowed up in life.

Since then natural happiness is not to be found here below, let us consider moral happiness, which is the exercise of virtue, and the government of the sentiments, passions, and actions, according to the rules of reason. This happiness seems attainable, because this behaviour is reasonable. But when we come to practise it we find that it is not so easy as it is reasonable. For our passions are rooted in our nature, heightened by custom, and inflamed by provocations; and therefore it is a necessary, but a difficult part of wisdom and goodness to keep them in due order. They are woven into our very being, and a part of ourselves; they

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are so many different perceptions of pleasure and pain, arising from the good and the evil which we experience. An high degree of good presented to us excites admiration and esteem; a trifling and transient good produces indifference and neglect. What seems acceptable excites desire, love, and joy: what seems offensive causes abhorrence and sadness. When we are injured, anger and resentment arise; when we see others suffer, we feel pity and commiseration. To subdue and extirpate these passions is no more practicable than it is to take away the natural impressions of good and evil, since our affections and perturbations arise from these impressions, and are the inward motions corresponding with these outward causes. As without passions, we could neither love, nor desire, nor rejoice, nor detest, nor be grieved; so neither could we perform our duty, nor feel the satisfaction which follows duty regularly performed. But our affections are often imposed upon, and impose upon us: Many things appear to us to be good, which are not so; and many things appear better or worse than they are; and we are disposed to err both in the object and in the measure of our passions. In the regulation of

them lies the true exercise of reason, and it is generally agreed that the most which the most prudent person can do, is to keep his affections in tolerable order, to form right judgments of the good and evil of this world, and thereby to acquire as much moral happiness as is attainable by an imperfect creature. Reason assures us that the practice of virtue is more desirable than the pursuit of riches, honours, and sensual pleasures, which are deceitful and transitory; that the chief good of man lies in imitating and resembling his Maker as far as he can, and that the best quality in which he can resemble him is goodness; that honest endeavours to be blameless and dutiful, which will produce a gradual improvement, though they will not place him in a state of felicity and perfection, yet will assist him much, as to increasing the satisfaction and lessening the sorrows of life; and this certainly is a great point gained. Those are valuable medicines which will abate pain and assuage the violence of a disease, though they will not quite remove it: so if moral arguments will check the extravagance and fury of lawless and turbulent passions, they do considerable service, though they cannot wholly subdue them. A good person
endeavours

endeavours to keep within the bounds of discretion, to suit his mind to his circumstances, and his inclinations to his duty, and to resign himself to Providence. And he who preserves this temper may be pronounced tolerably happy, compared with those who are fretful and restless in their disposition, unreasonable in their desires and expectations, impatient under disappointments, and thereby increasing their calamities. All the means that we have to acquire any thing approaching to peace of mind and contentment are placed in the moral acts, in temperance, meekness, patience, charity, and piety. All temporal possessions without these are vanity and vexation, and tend to our detriment both now and hereafter. Thus it appears that moral happiness is attainable in some degree, but not in a perfect manner.

As to political, or civil, or social happiness, that depends upon the social virtues, upon the good offices which men receive and return. It is evident that their condition would be far better than it is, if all families, and all larger communities or nations, would dwell together like brethren, and pursue the common good. But if there be none of this sort of happiness to be expected till men will agree to act in this manner,

manner, we may be too certain that it will never be found in the present state. For self-love is the prevalent passion, and self-interest is the predominant design which is assiduously carried on, though both are often covered over with popular and plausible pretences; and there is so much of both in civil society, besides a sad variety of vices, disorders, and calamities, that social happiness must be a most imperfect and precarious blessing.

It appears then, in every point of view, that human creatures are not capable of a large degree of happiness in this world; and therefore it is with great reason that Christianity puts off the expectation of it to another state, and says to every obedient servant of Jesus Christ, Blessed art thou; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

To judge by the behaviour of men, even of those who call themselves Christians, we must conclude that too many want much happiness here, and seek none elsewhere. They are as earnest, anxious, assiduous, violent in the pursuit of things temporal, as if they acted upon principle, and were convinced that nothing else was of any value. But either religious persons are fools and distracted, who expect a bet-

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ter life, and prepare themselves for it, or these men are so, who mind only the present. It is easy to determine where the folly and the frenzy lies, since the latter have nothing to justify their proceeding, whilst the former have the concurrent judgment of the wisest, and the desires and hopes of the best men, and a sense of the deceitfulness of the world, and the nature and operations of the soul, which proclaim its immortal duration, and progressive improvement; and, above all, the gospel of Jesus Christ promising life eternal to the faithful. It is therefore our true and only wisdom to adhere to this gospel, to be guided by it, and to make all other considerations bow down and submit to it.

The true happiness of man is of a spiritual kind, as being suitable to his nature and to his best qualities. The mind or the soul is the seat and source of the contentment, satisfaction, and felicity proper to it, and consequently the highest degree of happiness must be of the rational and intellectual kind.

This felicity must begin, and its foundation must be laid, in the present state, though its completion is not to be expected till the next. Now is the seed-time, hereafter is the harvest.

The promise of eternal life which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ, is made only to those who prepare themselves for it, who seek it by patient continuance in well-doing, who work out their own salvation with pious fear and religious diligence. By this method they become the children of God, and partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Without these qualifications the gospel gives no hopes of entering into the kingdom of God. So there is a necessity that this state of mind should commence now, not as to perfection, but as it is a disposition not enslaved to things temporal, and setting a due value on things eternal. And even as to the present, such a temper arising from Christian principles affords more satisfaction than an affluence of all earthly enjoyments.

Christianity, if we conform ourselves to its precepts, enlarges our hopes, and removes our fears and distrust concerning another world. Our Saviour came with a character and an authority sufficient to settle this important point. He delivered it as a certain doctrine, and he confirmed it by undeniable proofs. This is the first great advantage of Christianity. The next is, that it gives a comfortable support to

the mind under all the changes and troubles of life; and this by teaching a particular providence and a divine assistance.

Our Lord inculcated to his disciples the doctrine of a special providence over their persons and their concerns, and exhorted them to a dependence upon it, assuring them, that their heavenly Father would take care of them, if they would cast their cares upon him; which indeed were a bold thing for any man to do, unless God had given him leave, and even made it a part of his duty. But this must be understood in a way suiting our Creator and ourselves. Not as though he would take care of careless wretches, who bring themselves into straits, and become miserable by their own folly, rashness, and negligence. A prudent activity even in temporal concerns is the duty of all; but when they have done their part, they ought not to be anxious about the event. And thus they escape some of those many troubles which spring from their own uneasy minds.

The Christian doctrine, of divine assistance concurring with human endeavours, is also full of satisfaction. It encourageth us to ask that we may receive, and promiseth grace to help in

time of need, and in the hour of trial and temptation.

The Christian doctrine is not morose; it doth not discard pleasure, as evil in itself; but it represents it as dangerous to gratify the senses with every pleasing object, and to shun every act that is attended with labour, abstinence, and self-denial. Such persons are said to have had their reward, and received their good things, and to have no pretensions to any thing future, and to any thing better. As to the pleasures which are consistent with the health of the soul and of the body, with the duties of a rational creature, Religion forbids them not, but advises us to receive them, as the gifts of God, with thanksgiving. If by care and foresight we can keep ourselves free from pain, there is a true satisfaction in so doing; for health and ease are the most valuable pleasures of the senses, though they are not the most lively, make not the most stir, and give not the deepest impression, and he is wise who secures them without using any sinful means.

Solomon says of wisdom or religion, that her ways are ways of pleasantness. Doubtless they are; for, if religion is self-government, and

and the performance of the most commendable actions, it produces a calm and unfullied pleasure, surpassing those of the senses and of the imagination. To worship God, to forsake sin, and to do righteousness, will appear upon due consideration the most desirable conduct.

The worship of God is the natural disposition of a creature towards its Creator. If there be a satisfaction in serving and obliging a good master, a good friend, a good parent, it must be eminently found in pleasing our Maker.

To forsake our sins by repentance and amendment, is to exchange folly for wisdom, to consider our latter end, before consideration is too late, and to seize upon the only means of avoiding the displeasure of God, and all its dreadful consequences,

To act suitably to our station, circumstances, abilities, and obligations, is in some measure its own reward. Nothing bears up the mind with such support as the testimony of conscience, looking back with approbation, and looking forward with hope. Time and possession, which are apt to damp all the pleasures of the lower kind, increase this. True religion alone can compose the mind, not by discarding providence out of the creation, but by believing in it,

it, submitting to it, and depending upon it. It is a miserable comfort to hope, with the unbeliever, that death puts an end to all. Even this wretched hope will forsake him when he most wants it. Christianity gives that solid hope that an honest and virtuous life ends in the possession of the greatest good, in an access to him, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

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S E R M O N III.

LUKE xxiii. 31.

*For if they do these things in a green tree, what
shall be done in the dry?*

WHEN our Lord was led away, to complete the sad scene of his sufferings, there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. He was affected at the pious sorrow which they expressed on the occasion; but he had no consolations to offer to them at that gloomy time. The consolations were reserved for the day of his resurrection, which to all those who honoured and loved him, and who wept at his death, would be a day of joy. But knowing what would come to pass, and how

how severely his blood would be required at the hands of that wicked generation, he turned about, and thus addressed himself to these mourners; Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

These words of the text are a proverbial saying, which was well understood by those to whom they were spoken, though to most of us they want explication. Observe, therefore, that the situation and condition of the Jews was very different in ancient times from that in which they are at present. Scattered over the face of the earth, and not possessors of lands, they now live by trade and commerce. Formerly, they were a nation of husbandmen, cultivating their own ground, and subsisting upon its produce. The sacred writers therefore, accommodating their style to such persons, remarkably abound with rural expressions, and

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and with allusions to those objects which the gardens and the fields present. Good men are compared to green and flourishing trees, and bad men to barren or withered trees. The righteous man, says the Psalmist, is like a tree planted by the water-side, whose leaf shall not wither, and which bringeth forth fruit in its season. Of the wicked it is said, that his branch shall not be green. In Ezekiel, God threatens that he will cut off every green tree and every dry tree in Jerusalem; that is, that in the calamities which should befall the nation, the righteous and the wicked should be involved in the same ruin. John the Baptist represents the evil generation to which he was sent as trees, which, bringing forth no good fruit, should be hewed down, and cast into the fire.

These are a few instances out of many which might be produced, shewing that the green tree represents the righteous, and the dry tree the wicked man; and so our Lord's words, reduced to common language, and without a figure, are to be taken thus; If God's providence permit me, an innocent person, who have gone about doing good, who have done harm to none, and have injured neither Jew nor

nor Gentile, to be thus cruelly used by my own nation, and by the Romans, how much sorer calamities, by a just judgment, will befall this wicked generation, whose iniquities will exasperate both God and man, and who will work out their own destruction?

These words suggest to us three subjects for our meditation and instruction.

I. Here is a prophecy, which being exactly accomplished confirms our Saviour's divine mission, and character.

II. God sometimes permits his best servants to be cruelly used, and to endure grievous afflictions in this life, and this for good and wise reasons and purposes.

III. The usual effect of great wickedness is great misery; and such offenders often bring upon themselves the heaviest sufferings, by their own evil deeds, by the common course of things, and sometimes by divine judgments; and these afflictions are far worse than those to which the good are exposed.

I. The words of our Saviour are a prophecy, which being exactly accomplished confirms his divine mission and character.

The two principal proofs which a teacher, declaring himself sent from God, can give of his

his authority, are miracles and prophecies. The evidence arising from these credentials is familiar and plain, and in a great measure suited to all capacities. Miracles speak to the senses of the beholders, and carry with them a present conviction, especially when the doctrine and the miracles mutually support each other, when the doctrine is good, and the miracles are beneficial. Afterwards indeed the evidence is somewhat altered, as it respects those who have not beheld the miracles, and it must be supported by well-attested testimony, and by the effects which they have produced in the world, and which continue to be manifest. The miracles of Christ and of his apostles have all the certainty that facts of that nature can possibly exhibit. Prophecies, when we are satisfied that they were delivered and recorded before the event, and when we find their completion to be full and undeniable, are standing proofs for all ages; and in foretelling events, as in performing miracles, our Saviour surpassed all teachers beyond all comparison.

A studious reader of the gospel, will observe in his discourses perpetual indications of his knowledge of futurity, and proofs of his prophetic

phetic character. Even his parables, besides the moral instruction which they contain, are most of them prophecies of considerable events, which were accomplished, some sooner, and some later. But of all his predictions, that of the destruction of Jerusalem and of its consequences is the most remarkable and striking; and the divine Providence which directed three evangelists to record it, seems to have raised up and preserved the Jewish historian Josephus to publish a detail of the calamities which befell his nation, of which he was an eye-witness, and in which he was a fellow-sufferer, and to verify every part of Christ's discourses on that mournful and dreadful subject. So that we might venture to rest the truth of Christianity upon this single point, and to challenge its adversaries to produce any reasonable objection to it.

Weep not for me, said our Saviour, to the religious women, who followed and lamented him; reserve your tears for yourselves, and for your children; your calamities will require them all, and you will have none to spare for other occasions.

Here it may occur to the thoughts of one who is versed in the history of those times, that

that as the ruin of Jerusalem was an event which would not take place till after forty years, most of the spectators of Christ's death, both his friends and his foes, would be gone off from the stage before that desolation came, and out of the reach of those calamities. But even upon this supposition, our Saviour might well speak by way of anticipation, and represent those distresses as at hand, which would surely come to pass before all that generation was quite extinct; and the daughters of Jerusalem had sufficient cause to mourn for those evils which would involve their children, their posterity, and their nation; even as Christ himself, at another time, entering into Jerusalem, and foreseeing and foretelling its destruction, wept over it, and was greatly afflicted at the prospect of calamities of which he was not to partake. This is human nature, I will not say human weakness, nor give so harsh a name to a passion so amiable.

But without having recourse to these solutions, which are really unnecessary, I observe that the days of tribulation were indeed at hand, as our Lord had declared; and that the divine vengeance did not move so slowly as it used to do on other occasions.

Though the total ruin and dispersion of the nation was not completed till after forty years, yet the beginning of it is to be dated within five years after Christ's death, and its duration presents to us one of the most calamitous periods that stands recorded in history, and is a series of oppression and persecution under wicked rulers, of false prophets put to the sword with their deluded followers, of wars, seditions, rebellions, captivities, famines, fires, earthquakes, pestilences, robberies, assassinations, not only in Judea, but in other places where the Jews sojourned. And indeed it was a time of general distress; and the Roman empire was in a deplorable condition, and ruled not by men but by monsters.

II. From the text we may observe, that God sometimes permits his best servants to be cruelly used, and to endure grievous afflictions in this life; and this for good and wise reasons.

As to the sufferings of Christ, they are not to be paralleled with those of other good men. His were altogether singular, and for singular purposes. He suffered to confirm his own doctrines, by laying down his life as a martyr, in testimony of the truth of his mission, to

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accomplish the predictions concerning himself in the antient prophecies, to make an atonement for sin, and to qualify himself for the sublime offices of a Redeemer, and a mediator between God and man, and a Judge of the world at the last day. His sufferings were also voluntary; he laid down his life of his own accord, and by his own free choice; and, accordingly, he gave up the ghost when he thought it proper, and before his natural strength was quite exhausted.

Amongst the various ends which he proposed by submitting to such indignities, and to such misery, one was to be an example and encouragement to us to resign ourselves to the dispensations of Providence, to receive good at the hands of God with gratitude, and to receive evil with submission and patience; looking beyond the present transitory scene, and setting our hearts on futurity and eternity.

The calamities, from which the good are not exempted, are obvious to every one's observation. Such is the state of things in all times: it was so from the infancy of the world, and it will probably continue so to its dissolution; so that it is altogether needless to

prove it. The question is, How this disorderly state is reconcilable with a wise and good Providence? a question which hath always exercised men of study and reflection. Several things have been offered to remove the difficulty, which have some weight in them, but come not fully up to the point. In truth, there is only one solution, a solution which is extremely obvious, and no less satisfactory, and that is, the supposition of a future state of retribution, and of a righteous judgment to come, when every one shall receive according to his deeds, by the rules of justice, equity, and mercy. This doctrine is so necessary for the vindication of the divine perfections, and for the satisfaction of virtuous minds, that it offers itself to every unprejudiced inquirer, and is the voice of nature and of reason. There is great cause to think that this opinion is as old as mankind; that our first parents received some information concerning it; and that it descended to their posterity by tradition. We find it in the most ancient pagan writers, and delivered by them as a most ancient notion; we find it in the old and the newly discovered world, in nations that had no connection and intercourse. It was not the invention of wise
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learned and political men ; it subsisted before arts and sciences flourished; before philosophy was known. The doctrine was indeed strangely disfigured by poetical fables, as was the whole theological system of the ancient pagans; and it became almost useless as to moral purposes, as to the support of virtue and the discouragement of vice. But still the immortal nature of the soul, and its subsistence in another state after death, was the general received opinion. In the books of the Old Testament, the doctrine of a future state is not so expressly delivered as to give full satisfaction to inquirers; which may be owing to the obscurity which must needs attend such very ancient writings, which are few in number, and in a dead language, and in a scanty language: but there are abundance of facts and of indications in the Old Testament, from which it may be fairly collected, and some texts also which, without any violence offered to the words, may be so interpreted as to contain this doctrine. It was the national faith in our Saviour's time, who mentions not a future state as a new revelation of his own, but as a doctrine known and acknowledged; and the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, who was better able than we are

now to know what was the ancient opinion of the Jews, assures us, that it had been received by all good men in all ages, both before the law, and under the law, down to his own times.

When we consider the system of the universe, and the ways of Providence in the formation and preservation, the order and connection of the whole, we find the fullest proofs of divine wisdom and power. All is grand, all is beautiful, and excites the utmost veneration for the Creator. But when we consider the course of things, as man is concerned in it, and reflect upon the calamities to which goodness is not unfrequently exposed, upon the shortness and troubles of life, we are involved in doubts and difficulties which nothing can remove but the doctrine of a future state. They who make no use of this doctrine, and consider man as only formed for the present world, and undertake to justify the ways of God upon this cold and comfortless system, by saying that God acts by general laws, and that whatever is right, may shew their parts and their ingenuity, but administer no kind of satisfaction to us, and leave us disappointed and discontented. Admit a day of retribution, when
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every seeming disorder shall be rectified; then the cloud is dispelled, and we enter into light and see clearly before us: Then we can discern that the afflictions of the good, either as corrections of their defects, or as trials of their obedience, and exercises of their virtues, and as methods of obtaining a more glorious recompense hereafter, and of moving in an higher sphere, are fit, reasonable, and profitable.

But whilst we vindicate the ways of God in suffering his best servants to be exposed to temporal evils, we should always remember that those evils are not only alleviated by many favourable circumstances, but that they are by no means the natural result of virtue and religion. On the contrary, an inoffensive behaviour, a pious disposition, a strict regard to the moral duties, sobriety and civility, industry and honesty, contentment and moderation, patience and charity, these stand at all times in the list of the things which are of good report and general approbation. So that if we except public calamities in which the good and the bad are involved, and persecution for righteousness' sake under wicked rulers, and some disorders incident to mortality, from which no forecast and caution can guard us, these ex-

ceptions being made, the present advantages lie entirely on the side of virtue and religion.

III. And this brings me to the third remark upon the text. The usual effect of great wickedness is great misery; and such offenders often bring upon themselves the heaviest sufferings by their own evil deeds, by the fixed laws of causes and effects, and sometimes by divine judgments; and these afflictions are far worse than any of those which befall the good.

If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If they treat me with such malice and cruelty, says our Lord, me who have been the friend of mankind; and repay my good offices with such hatred and ingratitude, what shall be the condition of such wicked people, who will be detested by all the world; and to what calamities will they not be exposed, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and divine vengeance will overtake and overwhelm them?

Since our Lord is here speaking of temporal calamities, and not of punishments in the next life, it might be objected with some sort of plausibility that the condition of the most wicked person upon earth could not be more calamitous than his own. For suppose a man

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to have been a false witness, an adulterer, a rebel, a robber and a murderer, and as eminently vicious and mischievous as can be conceived, he cannot fare worse than to be seized, bound, insulted, reviled, beaten, scourged and crucified. But to this remark there are two replies.

First, our Lord considers the destruction of a whole nation as a greater calamity than that of one person: he hath in view, not the nature of the suffering, but the number of the sufferers, by which estimate the sum total of misery becomes immensely greater.

Secondly, When the same evils befall the righteous and the wicked, we are to estimate the degrees of suffering, not from the nature of the calamity considered in itself, but from the effect which it hath on the sufferer; and by this rule we must pronounce the afflictions and miseries of the wicked to be beyond measure heavier than those of the good. The latter have many resources of comfort, and many alleviations, of which the former are entirely deprived. When a person who in the main hath behaved himself well, who hath been useful in his generation, who hath the love and esteem of good men, who hath faith and trust
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in God, when such an one is under affliction, he hath the testimony of his conscience, the hope of divine assistance to support him, and of a better state hereafter; and this will enable him to exercise the meek and humble virtues of patience and resignation, which are also of a quieting and healing nature. But if he should suffer purely upon a moral and a religious account, then his faith in God, together with God's express promises, will strengthen him still more, so as to produce in him a sober satisfaction, and a serious joy, which is very consistent with a state of affliction; for there are pleasures of the melancholy as well as of the lively kind. Our Saviour, who knew what was in man, and who never required impossibilities from him, exhorts his disciples not only to be patient and contented, but to rejoice and be exceeding glad when they were ill used and persecuted for his sake and for the sake of the gospel; and gives this plain and satisfactory reason, because, great will be your reward in heaven. His apostles use the same argument on the same occasions, an argument, the force of which every one may feel and comprehend. For this cause, says St. Paul, we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward

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ward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

As for the ungodly, it is not so with them: They are not only exposed to these disasters which are common to the children of men, but to many evils of their own creating. The good are seldom without some friends; the wicked seldom have any friends. The good may meet with some foes; the wicked must be surrounded with foes, and are odious both to those who resemble them, and to those who resemble them not. When adversity overtakes them, they have nothing to support them under it. If they look back, their past behaviour upbraids them; if they look forward, they fear an offended God, and a future judgment, and a state still worse than the present, unless they can take refuge in that false and miserable hope, that death shall put an end to their being; the result of all which, is impatience, and remorse, and confusion, and frenzy, and despair.

How different is the latter end of such a person from that of Him, who said, It is finished: Father, into thy hands I commend my

my spirit ! How different from that of the apostle, who said, I am ready to be offered up ; and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith : Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord shall give me at that day !

A true servant of Jesus Christ, under great affliction, may feel a dejection of spirit, and be inclined to take up the words of the patriarch Jacob, and say ; Few and evil are the days of my pilgrimage. Few and evil ; but the one is a corrective of the other ; if those days are evil, they are few ; and then follows an everlasting day of peace and rest from all trouble.

All the calamitous effects of vice and irreligion were signally exemplified in the ruin of the Jewish nation, which Christ foresaw, and foretold, and lamented, but could not prevent ; for salvation itself cannot save those who are resolved to perish. Those calamities were divine judgments, in which the wrath of God concurred with the wickedness of sinners, to produce, as our Lord said, such tribulation as never was from the beginning of the world, and never should be again.

But

S E R M O N III. 61

But, generally speaking, there is no occasion for a divine interposition to punish wicked men, or wicked nations. Mere natural causes will produce such effects; and sin, when it is outrageous and extremely sinful, will be its own tormentor and executioner.

The practical inference from all these premises, in few words, is this: Keep innocence, and take heed to the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last.

But generally speaking, there is no occasion
for a feeling of responsibility to another person
except in cases where the person is
in a position of authority, and then it is only
in cases where the person is in a position of
authority that the feeling of responsibility is
justified. In cases where the person is in a
position of authority, the feeling of responsibility
is justified, and in cases where the person is
not in a position of authority, the feeling of
responsibility is not justified.

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S E R M O N IV.

ISAIAH V. 20.

Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil.

FROM the prophecies of Isaiah it appears that it was his lot to live in very wicked times; and amongst the sinners against whom he denounces God's judgments, he in the text censures and threatens those who called evil good and good evil, as a most corrupted set of men both in principle and in practice. Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. To transgress God's commandments, his laws and statutes delivered by his prophets; and confirmed by a series of miracles, was an

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heinous crime ; but to call evil good and good evil, was to advance a step farther in impiety ; to lay the profane axe to the root of righteousness, to destroy all religion, natural as well as revealed, and to sink into mere atheism. This sense the words of the prophet present to us ; and, by the plainest consequence, they contain this truth, that there is an everlasting and unchangeable difference of moral good and evil, and not dependent on any revealed and written law of God, arising from the fixed nature and the stable relation which things bear to each other ; and that right and wrong, truth and falsehood, virtue and vice, may be discerned by the due exercise of that reason which God hath implanted in us. This is supposed in the text, wherein the prophet compares the difference of moral good and evil, presented to the human understanding, with that of light and darkness discerned by the eye, and of bitter and sweet tasted by the palate ; that is, as a plain undeniable truth, which forceth its evidence upon a rational mind, and cannot be proved by any thing more clear and manifest than itself. If any one should contend that light is darkness and darkness is light, that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter, that crooked is straight and straight

S E R M O N IV. 65

is crooked, he would pass for one who had lost his senses; and if he forms the same judgment concerning moral good and evil, and acts accordingly, doing what is evil, and justifying it as being good and right, he must expect to be treated as he deserves, and compulsion and correction are the only remedies that can be applied to him.

There have always been persons, such as those of whom Isaiah complains, who, having given themselves up to iniquity, would fain, for the quiet of their own minds, discard the differences of good and evil in human actions, as if there were no rule to try them by; as if they were nothing but the arbitrary fancies of men, according to the different influences of education and custom; as if doing well were only a fashion of appearing suitable to the country we inhabit, which varies as much as the different dresses and languages of nations, and their different tastes and inclinations; or, as if present pleasures and pain were the only standard of good and evil.

Others there are, very different from the former, sober, pious, and well-meaning persons, who out of a mistaken zeal for revealed religion, and for the honour of Christianity, are

not contented with preferring the revealed to the natural law, for which we shall not blame them, but are apt to depreciate human reason, which also is the gift of God; to slight natural religion, which also is the law of God; and to resolve all moral good and evil, and all moral duty into the mere positive will and command of God set forth in the law and the gospel, as though without such instruction and assistance we could neither discern nor perform any one good deed.

But upon better consideration, and nearer inspection, they will find even by the scriptures, as well as by the light of reason, that some actions are good and some evil in themselves, and without respect to any revealed law; and that there are some stated rules and measures by which we may judge of good and evil by our sense and reason. And yet at the same time it is very certain that revelation is of the utmost value and importance; that this additional gift of God is highly useful to guide and improve our natural notions of morality, and to enforce the practice of it; so that we must be very ignorant or very unthankful, if we do not discern its evidence, and receive it with faith and gratitude.

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The difference of good and evil is a subject of the highest concern, since upon it is founded the truth of religion, the obligation to virtue, and the peace and satisfaction of our minds. Upon it is founded the knowledge which we can attain of God's moral perfections, for we cannot prove that God is good, unless we have antecedent notions of goodness considered in itself, and separated from all law, will, or appointment, divine or human.

I shall therefore now proceed to prove the different nature of our actions, as to moral good or evil, from the history of the most ancient times as recorded in the sacred books, from the relation in which we stand to God, from the frame of human nature, from the common interest of mankind, and from the will of God, as discoverable by reason, and as discovered to us by revelation.

When God had formed our first parents, he gave them one law, a law of abstinence from a certain fruit, in token of homage and submission to their Creator. We do not find that he added to this any moral laws to direct their behaviour; and yet he certainly expected from them that they should have a grateful sense

* Stillingfleet, Sermon. xxxvii.

of his benefits, and acknowledge him for their maker and governor; that they should love and assist one another; that they should not wilfully and needlessly hurt any of the brute creatures subjected to their dominion; and that they should take care of their children, who, by his promise, were to spring from them in due time. God having conferred upon them senses and understanding, gave them thereby a capacity of discerning their obligation to perform such duties.

After their unhappy fall, it is highly probable that God directed them to offer up sacrifices to him, as acts of religion which he vouchsafed to accept.

Accordingly we find that the two sons of Adam made their oblations to God, who favourably received the offering of Abel, and rejected that of Cain in some visible and sensible manner; and told Cain, who was full of wrath and envy, that if he did well he should be accepted, but if he did not well, he should not be accepted, but treated as a sinner.

Here is the different nature of human actions, doing well and doing ill; and both of them are supposed to have been known to Cain; and also to have been so far in his power, that
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it was his own fault if he did amiss. And when for killing his brother he was cast out from his father's sight, and from the presence of God, and condemned to be a vagabond and a fugitive, he did not presume, bad as he was, to deny his crime, or to plead ignorance, or want of power to restrain his passions, but only lamented the severity of his punishment. Thus the moral laws were engraved by the finger of God in the hearts of men, before they were engraved on tables of stone.

After this God swept away the inhabitants of the old world by a flood, for their extreme wickedness, and immorality, and their sins against the law of nature.

And when, after the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and his sons, we find only one moral precept revealed or delivered to them, and this was, Not to commit murder, which probably had been a prevalent crime amongst those whom God had destroyed from the face of the earth; and therefore God enforced that moral law by his own declaration, that he would be the avenger of those who violated it. The Jewish writers indeed mention seven precepts given to the sons of Noah; but they have them not from the text of

Moses; they have them from their own tradition.

From the time of Noah to that of Moses, we read of severe judgments which God executed upon wicked nations for their transgressions; not so much of his revealed will, as of the natural law; as was the destruction of Sodom and its neighbourhood, and of the seven nations of Canaan.

And indeed from the whole dispensation of Providence, as set forth in the Old Testament, it may be collected that the distinctions of right and wrong, good and evil, just and unjust, might always have been evident to those who would make a proper use of their senses and faculties.

But that we may not carry this point too far, it is to be observed that men being frail and fallible, surrounded with temptations, and having passions as well as reason, God did not totally leave them to discover their duty by their own natural abilities. Certain religious traditions were, without question, delivered down by Adam and his sons, and some prophets and pious teachers were raised up in the earliest ages from time to time by the divine Providence to instruct and correct the world, and

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to enforce the laws of nature and the moral duties, by declaring that God required the observance of them, and that he would be the rewarder of the good, and the punisher of the wicked. Such an one was Enoch, and such was Noah, prophets, and righteous men, and preachers of righteousness in their generations.

Let us proceed to consider the different nature of actions from our relation to God.

That there is a maker and governor of the world, who is endued with all perfections, is evident from his works, from the world and all that it contains. So says human reason, and so say the holy scriptures in many places. And thence, I observe, it clearly follows that this great and fundamental truth is discoverable without the help of revelation. The sun, moon, and stars, teach it; the day and the night proclaim it; heaven and earth bear witness to it.

Without any instructor besides our own understanding, we know that we are, and that we did not make ourselves, and that we owe our being to a superior cause; and then we proceed to the discovery of a first Cause of us and of all other things; and thence we also discern our duty towards him.

It is absurd to suppose that God should have supreme power, and we not bound to revere him; that he should have perfect goodness, and we not be bound to love him; that he should have unerring wisdom, and we not to be bound to trust in him, to depend upon him, and to submit to the dispensations of his providence. He who gives life and the comforts of life to his creatures, hath a right to their gratitude and to their best services; and if it be absurd not to think ourselves obliged to obey him, it is right and fit to obey him, and to conform our will to his. So that with respect to God there must be moral good or moral evil in our behaviour.

As the foundations of religion are thus fixed and unchangeable, so the continual practice of religion is necessary through the whole course of our lives. This in scripture is called, Walking with God, as Enoch and Noah did, before the law was given, living in a continual sense of the duty which they owed him. And the want of this sense of duty introduced the great degeneracy and the ensuing destruction of the old world by the deluge.

They who seem to have little or no value for religion, yet will often tell you that they have

have a great regard for virtue, for honour, for justice, and for gratitude to friends and benefactors. If they would reason consistently, they would find the same obligations in an higher manner to serve God, who is both their master and their father.

Another way to find out the differences of good and evil is from the consideration of the peculiar frame of human nature.

We may observe that the beasts, though so much our inferiors, fulfil the designs of Providence by pursuing the ends for which they were made. When they act according to the impulses and the objects of the senses, they do nothing amiss. None can blame them for eating and drinking as nature directs, because they have no higher principle to govern them. But they are no patterns for us whom God hath endued with faculties above sense, and who are able to controul and subdue the inclinations which we have in common with brutes. We find in them that nature hath limited and determined their appetites within certain bounds which they have no desire to transgress. Nature hath not so dealt with mankind; for our desires are impetuous and boundless; but then God hath implanted in
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us understanding and reason to direct them, and to judge what is right and wrong, how far the inclinations may be safely complied with, and when they are to be checked. And thus, as man by the help of reason and reflection, and by moral motives, becomes vastly superior to the brutes ; so by vice, and particularly by intemperance and sensuality, he sinks as much beneath them, and runs into excesses which are not to be found in them.

Hence the real and moral differences of good and evil may be proved ; for the superior faculties in man must have a superior good agreeable to them. And as the inferior faculties, namely the bodily senses, have always external objects suitable to them, or unsuitable ; so it is with those nobler powers of the mind, thinking, reflecting, inquiring, judging, refusing, and chusing. The proper objects of these powers are moral or religious good and evil.

No faculty creates its own object, but only discerns it. The sense of seeing doth not make external and visible objects, nor do any of the other senses produce the things which affect them. The objects already exist, and the senses perceive them. In like manner, truth and falsehood, right and wrong, are the objects
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of the understanding; and no man surely is so absurd or stupid as to think that we can make a thing true by believing it, or false by disbelieving it. So virtue or goodness is the proper object of our unprejudiced and reasonable desires. Every one would infallibly chuse it, if he acted according to his nature, to pure and undefiled reason, and were not seduced by sensual motives and temporary views.

We may also judge of good and evil by the common interest and sense of mankind. And here we are not to be determined so much by the opinion of this or that person, though eminent perhaps in some respects, as by the general consent of men in approving things praiseworthy and conducing to the common advantage. It is possible that some men, some societies, and some nations may be mistaken in the nature of some particular actions, accounting those good or indifferent which others account evil, or the contrary. But in general, mankind are agreed that gratitude, fidelity, justice, and temperance do more advance the common interest than an opposite behaviour. And surely we have more reason to deduce the nature of good and evil from general and common notions, than from those which may only

only suit private and particular views and inclinations.

It is to be considered that some things are so universally esteemed, that even they who do not practise them must approve them; and this shews their intrinsic and invariable excellence. For men are very partial to their own conduct, and therefore when they approve virtue in others, though themselves be vicious, there must be an overbearing evidence in favour of it. Thus the restraining of pride, anger, envy, malice, and lust, gratitude to benefactors, love and respect to parents, justice, mercy, magnanimity, liberality, civility, good nature, these are of universal esteem; they who practise them not, usually approve them in others, and endeavour to conceal their own deviations, lest they should lose their reputation. Thus do they acknowledge that no person can obtain or secure real esteem without passing for a lover of virtue.

The common and public interest cannot be supported by any measures contrary to virtue and goodness. Societies cannot be upheld, unless men in some degree regulate their own passions, and consult the good of others as well as their own. That which tends to make the

the condition of one single person happy, tends to make that of many so, when they are joined together. And it is not only the interest of the governed, but of the governors also; for the favour of men, as the favour of God, is only to be obtained by a good behaviour.

Lastly, the nature of good and evil is also to be proved from the will of God, is discoverable by reason, and as discovered to us by revelation.

We have already offered sufficient proofs to satisfy those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and an understanding to comprehend, that there is a moral law written in the heart and explained by the conscience, which requires every one to put a difference between doing well, and doing ill. St. Paul affirms this to be the case of men in general, of the Gentiles in their utmost degeneracy. The law of nature indeed was grievously corrupted and defaced, and yet not so far neither as to cause all moral obligation to cease; for if men will bring themselves to such a state of stupidity and wickedness as in a manner to lose all inward feeling and moral sense, God may justly punish them, notwithstanding their ignorance, because they have wilfully destroyed their own

own understanding. There may be monsters in the moral, as in the natural world; but they are not standards by which to judge of mankind. In this case we are to compare their opinion with that of the sober and unprejudiced, and see which is most agreeable to nature. And in this inquiry the revealed will of God is our great assister, which determines in a short and decisive manner what actions are good and pleasing to our Maker, and entitled to a reward; and what actions are contrary to the former, and deserving punishment. So that if we, under the gospel, are ignorant of these things, it must be eminently our own fault; and what is our fault, can never be our excuse.

And here it may well be asked, Whence comes it to pass that men should lose the notions of good and evil so far as to stand in need of a divine law to reinforce them, whilst yet they never lose the notion of things pleasing or hurtful to their senses?

We may answer first, that sense hath usually nothing to corrupt its judgment; but it is not so with the determinations which the mind passeth upon well-doing and evil-doing; for there is often an inclination one way more than another, and this inclination is towards the wrong

wrong way, arising from various causes internal and external; so that serious consideration and caution are necessary to go before the judgment. Men have received from their Maker all the faculties of the mind needful and useful for this purpose, but they do not love to use them in these matters, and chuse rather to yield to their irregular passions; and being thus pre-engaged, they would fain believe that to be right which pleases for the present, and seek out pretences and excuses for their faults, and are very ingenious in deceiving themselves.

Secondly, the reasons of good and evil are not usually understood in their whole extent by the bulk of mankind. It is generally agreed that there are some right and some wrong actions; but accurate notions of right and wrong have seldom been found where revelation hath not been received; which should teach us to set a just value upon the gospel. But yet, if good and evil depended entirely upon the revealed will of God, then without it the Gentile evil-doers could not be convinced of their enormous crimes, which is contrary to St. Paul's doctrine in his epistle to the Romans. But after all, it is not an obvious matter to settle morality upon the dictates of unassisted nature,

nature, as it appears from the considerable disputes and differences which have been found on various occasions.

Thirdly, Great examples have greatly tended to corrupt mens notions of good and evil. Many there are who judge not for themselves, but take up with the judgments of others; and seeing men of knowledge, rank, and figure, practising iniquity without fear or remorse, they think they may do the same, and follow their leaders.

Fourthly, The prevalence of any vice in any country or society takes away mens apprehensions of the evil of it. When a vice is uncommon, men stare at it as at a monster; but when it is generally practised, they are insensibly reconciled to it. This is the case in every age, and in every place where wickedness is remarkably predominant. Then good and evil are seen to change their very names; virtue is called vice, and vice is called virtue; impious and immoral men are accounted brave, wise, prudent, dextrous, and useful to the public; and receive the rewards which ought to be given to the virtuous. Thus it was amongst the Greeks and the Romans in their worst state, and thus it was at Jerusalem before its
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final destruction. Shame, which is a natural sense of decency and honour, is a powerful check, and the fear of reproach and contempt keeps many a person from doing many ill things, when other considerations would have small influence upon him. But as evil practices grow fashionable, the shame which should attend them wears off. Yet still there are certain iniquities which always stand condemned by common consent; and this discovers a natural sense of shame, as to those sins at least. And there have never been wanting good men to testify against the prevailing vices of their own times, nor honest historians to record and stigmatize them.

Knowing therefore by our own reason and conscience the nature of good and evil, and having the superadded advantages of revelation, let us act well, and let us act upon good principles. Our external offices of religion are valuable in the sight of God according to our inward dispositions, our upright views and honest endeavours. There is a wide difference between a duty performed by reason and inclination, by faith and gratitude, and a compliance which springs only from slavish fear, or mean formality, or lazy, dull, and lifeless custom. To good actions proceeding from good

dispositions, to this reasonable service, great promises are annexed; as peace with God, which implies pardon, reconciliation, adoption, and perfection, and the favour of Him who wants neither power to supply, nor goodness to help, nor wisdom to conduct his children. This produces peace with ourselves, and terminates in everlasting happiness.

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S E R M O N V.

MATT. xvi. 24.

—If any man will come after me, let him deny himself—.

WHICH of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?—Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and considereth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Thus spake our Saviour to the mixed multitudes, who attracted by his miracles, or delighted with his discourses, or prompted by curiosity and the love of novelty, affected to follow him where-soever he went.

He knew that many of them were in all respects unfit to enter his service; and therefore to discourage them, he represented it to them in the most offensive and formidable point of view, as extremely difficult and dangerous.

His words to them on this occasion contain the first and great rule of prudence, which is, Never to undertake what is above our power to accomplish; and therefore to consider carefully, before we engage in any important work, of what nature it is, what obstacles and difficulties may arise, and prevent the execution of it, and whether we have in our possession sufficient means to remove the impediments, and can collect all the materials necessary for the purpose. To be deficient here, and to propose to ourselves an end, without securing the means to accomplish that end, is a conduct unworthy of a rational agent.

So likewise, says our Lord, he that will come after me should first consider well what he must perform, and what he must endure; and if he find himself unequal to the undertaking, he hath nothing to do but to lay it aside.

The similitude of the builder, and of the warrior, is perfectly applicable to the Christian.

A nobler

A nobler plan and a sublimer project cannot enter the mind of man, than to be a follower of Christ. This is to build a tower, whose foundation is deep and strong, and whose summit reaches to heaven, wherein the owner may dwell safe from all assaults, and by which he may ascend to the presence of God. This is to conquer a kingdom which cannot be shaken, and to obtain an incorruptible crown.

Considering the attempt in this point of view, who would not readily enter into the service of Christ? To whom else should we go? as St. Peter said to his Master: Thou hast the words of eternal life.

But on the other hand, the obstacles and the dangers, the charges and the loss must be well considered; for if the project of following Christ is great and glorious, it is also expensive and perilous.

If the builder of this tower hath not sufficient means to finish it, if he interrupt his work to follow other undertakings, if what he raised at one time he pulls down at another, his work will come to nothing. If the warrior hath not half the forces, nor half the skill, conduct, courage, and perseverance of his enemy, he will be defeated.

Many are the difficulties which attend the Christian warfare; many are the enemies from without; and, which is still worse, there is a formidable enemy within, who must be subdued. A man must deny and renounce all that he hath, friends, relations, possessions, repose, passions, natural inclinations, and life itself; else, says Christ, he cannot be my disciple. It is to no purpose for him to join himself to me to-day, and to fall off and desert me to-morrow.

Christ had just before declared to his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem, where he should suffer all kind of ill treatment, and be cruelly put to death. Upon this, Peter, who had a zeal for his Master's interests, but not as yet a zeal according to knowledge, was greatly disturbed and offended, and said, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee. But Christ, no less offended than he, replied with a severe rebuke, Get thee behind me; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Thou speakest like one who knows nothing of the predictions that must be accomplished in me, nothing of my office and character. I must pass through all these

these tribulations before I take possession of my heavenly kingdom. And you who are my disciples, deceive not yourselves, and dream not of worldly possessions and worldly prosperity. Not only I must suffer before I am crowned, but you also, if you desire to partake of my glory, must first partake of my sufferings. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.

Few words will suffice to explain what is meant by coming after, or following Christ. It is to imitate his example, to observe his precepts, to make him our guide, to acknowledge him for our Lord and Master. I shall therefore proceed to take into consideration the condition which Christ here requires of us, namely, self-denial. And as it hath been much misunderstood, I shall first reject the false interpretations which have been put upon it, and then establish its true sense and extent.

But let us not omit one previous and general reflection upon these words, If any man will come after me: they discover to us the method by which Christ proposed to make proselytes, and which ought to have been imitated by all who pretended to be his servants. He

propoundeth his religion in a manner adapted to make men sensible of its beauty, excellence, utility, and importance; he omits nothing proper to convince their understanding, and to gain their heart. Although the conditions which he exacts must needs appear harsh and formidable to flesh and blood, he dissembles them not; he sets them forth in plain and strong expressions. If men are willing, upon due consideration, to submit to these terms, he readily receives them into his service. If they refuse to comply, he contents himself with declaring to them that they need not follow him, and cannot be his disciples. As he sets before them no temporal advantages to allure them, no riches, pleasures, and dignities, but gives them to understand that they must expect the very reverse, poverty, reproach, losses, tribulation, and persecutions; so neither doth he terrify those who reject his offers with inflicting present punishments, nor exert his miraculous power in acts of severity. He forces none, he leaves every one at liberty to accept or to refuse. This is the character of truth, who relying upon her own merit, persuades, but constrains not. It is error that stands in need of violence, the supporter of Tyranny.

ranny. Thus the Jews basely and maliciously behaved themselves towards the apostles and the first Christians; thus the Roman emperors acted, who persecuted the primitive church; thus the Arabian impostor, Mahomet, and his successors, preached their doctrine, sword in hand; thus Rome catholic, as she calls herself, hath sent forth her apostles, mere ruffians and murderers, to extirpate those who will not submit to her arrogant claims.

Not so did the Son of God establish his religion; the weapons which he put into the hands of his apostles were spiritual. He sent them forth, to *compel* men to come in, as St. Luke emphatically expresses it, to compel them by entreaties, by expostulations, by the force of reason, by the most pressing arguments, and the clearest proofs, by representing to them the rewards and the corrections of the future state. But if these methods proved ineffectual, Depart, said our Lord, from such wicked and hardened people; leave them to themselves, and go to those who are better disposed.

I. Now let us proceed to that self-denial which Christ requires from his followers.

To

To consider it negatively, I observe that to deny or renounce ourselves, cannot mean, to renounce our senses and our reason.

This is a sacrifice which hath been often offered up to God by injudicious men; but it is what the Scripture calls the sacrifice of fools. For sense and reason are a light which comes from the Father of lights, a gift of God to his creatures; and therefore unless we can suppose that God will contradict himself, they cannot be contrary to the doctrines of scripture, since both flow from the same source. Although indeed the divine truths which relate to God and to a future state, and which are the objects of faith, are not properly the objects of our senses, yet they propose nothing to our assent, which is contradicted by our senses. It is absurd to reject the clear and concurring testimony of the senses under any pretence whatsoever; as is the case particularly in the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, or the whole bodily presence of Christ in ten thousand different places, at the same time, under the false appearance of bread and wine. This is to suppose that God endued us with senses, and with reason, which perpetually deceive us and

and impose upon us; a thought which his goodness, wisdom, and veracity will not suffer us to entertain.

Add to this that religion, both natural and revealed, is originally founded upon the testimony of the senses. It is by contemplating the construction of the universe, the usefulness, beauty, and conspiring harmony of all its parts, that we come to the knowledge of the invisible God. It is by the senses that faith gets admission into the heart; for faith cometh by hearing and reading the word of God. Christianity was established upon facts; and miracles performed, and predictions accomplished, were appeals to the human senses. That which we have heard, says St. John, that which we have seen, that which our hands have handled, declare we unto you. Behold my hands and my feet, said Christ to his doubting disciples, handle me and see.

What we have proved concerning the senses, holds still more strongly concerning the reasoning faculties. It is an unaccountable way of recommending Christianity, to affirm that men must renounce common sense and reason, before they can receive it. Its bitterest enemies cannot say worse of it, than these its injudicious

judicious friends. But after all, it is not in the power of the wildest and the weakest man to renounce reason intirely. Shut her out of the door, and she will come in at the windows. They who thus discard reason, do it upon some pretence or other, that is, for something which they take to be a reason. And their motive is this; They have adopted a system of Christianity which it is impossible to defend upon the common rules of logic, and the common principles in which men are agreed on all other occasions. And then they take refuge in mystery, though contradictions and absurdities are no mysteries, and they decry human reason, as having nothing to do in religion.

Moreover, To deny or renounce ourselves, is not to renounce our desire and hope of salvation, to be perfectly disinterested, resigned, and annihilated, as the mystical writers call it; to be as willing to go to hell as to go to heaven, if God think fit, and if it will promote his glory. This is a system of refined nonsense, which not long ago was received by many, but is now gone rather out of fashion. This is a new gospel; this is not the gospel of Christ, who came to redeem men from condemnation and destruction; and to offer them life eternal,

who

who makes use of this argument to induce men to follow him, and to suffer for his sake, if it becomes necessary, who applies to their hopes and their fears, by promises and threatenings, to incite them to obedience, and to deter them from sin. He will never require from his followers what he did not practise himself, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and then sat down at the right hand of God. And when in the text he requires self-denial, he adds by way of encouragement, Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. This is no argument at all to an annihilated man, who cares not what becomes of him, and whether he shall be happy or unhappy.

Again; To renounce ourselves, is not to renounce our free agency, and our acts of obedience. This is the sacrifice of another class of injudicious people, who depreciate human nature, and say that they have no power to think or to do any thing that is good. This at first sight looks like humility and self-denial. But what these people lose and give up one way, by quitting all pretensions to any good deeds, they gain another way, by clearing themselves of

of all sin. For certain it is, that if a man cannot do that which is lawful and right, he cannot do that which is unlawful and wrong; he can do nothing at all, and what he seems to do is done in him and for him, either by irresistible depravity, or by irresistible grace.

But this system of fatalism is contrary to common sense, constant experience, and inward feeling, which convince us, whether we will or no, that we have an inherent power of choosing and acting. If it be urged that according to the scriptures we cannot please God without his assistance, that is true; but it is so far from being an objection, that it is a proof of our freedom to accept of such assistance, and to concur with it. Indeed the very notion of help or assistance includes thus much; for it seems to be no less a barbarism, an impropriety of language, to talk of assisting a creature that hath no active powers of its own, than it would be to say that a man assists a burden to go along, when he takes it up, and carries it from one place to another.

There is indeed a certain sense in which we ought to renounce our own good works, and which we will consider, as we proceed.

Again;

Again; to renounce ourselves, is not to reject all the comforts and conveniences of life, and to afflict and torment ourselves, when nothing requires such a sacrifice. This was the frenzy which, in ancient times, beginning in the warm climates of the east, amongst fanatical people, spread itself through the Christian world, and produced those swarms of monks and hermits, who gave up all their possessions, chose a state of voluntary poverty, left their houses, friends, and families, retired from the world, lived single and solitary lives, and endured all sorts of hardships, heat, cold, rain, hunger, nakedness, unwholesome food, want of sleep, and cruel macerations, out of a zeal without knowledge, and an enthusiastic devotion. But this self-denying humour is now much abated, even in those places where it is recommended, and men are got into the other extreme of taking more care for the body than for the soul, for this world than for the next.

Thus far we have considered, negatively, what is not required by this precept: now let us proceed to inquire positively, wherein the duty of self-denial consists.

II. To deny ourselves is to renounce every evil affection, and every evil work, and to put off the corrupted man, in order to follow Christ. This is that regeneration, or new birth, which qualifies us for the service of Christ and for the kingdom of heaven. We are buried with Christ by baptism into death, says St. Paul to the Romans; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. If this renovation be lost afterwards by a life of sin, it may be retrieved by repentance and reformation, from the benefit of which we are never excluded. Repentance is our city of refuge, whose gates stand always open to receive the truly penitent. The scriptures indeed justly represent the more heinous and deliberate offences of those, who had received Christianity and Christian baptism in a state of maturity, as very dangerous, and yet not so far dangerous, as to give sinners cause to despair. And as for the lesser deviations, from which none is free, we must, whilst we strive against them, ask that forgiveness of God, of which we as daily stand in need, as we do of daily bread.

Again;

Again; To deny ourselves is, in a certain sense, to deny or renounce our own good works, our own righteousness; to renounce them so far as not to be proud of them, not to rely upon them as perfect and meritorious. The infirmities of our nature; our frequent deviations from the Christian rule; the greatness of the reward set before us, far surpassing any thing that we can do to deserve it, the divine assistance of which we stand in need; all these considerations should teach us the reasonableness of humility, and never permit us to think highly of ourselves.

This vain-boasting and self-sufficiency was the great fault which our Saviour, mild and gentle as he was, so severely rebuked in the Pharisees, and represented as most odious in the sight of God, as it was both groundless in itself, and as it was always attended with an uncharitable and censorious spirit, and an arrogant contempt of others.

Upon this false notion of human perfection, was afterwards founded the absurd and shocking system of works of supererogation, contrived by the church of Rome. It was supposed that holy persons, apostles, saints, martyrs, confessors, and also the practisers of

monkish austerities, had performed many more acts of piety, and mortification, and self-denial, than were necessary for their own salvation. And as it was a great pity that so many good works should be lost, the pope, as head of the church, and lord of the manor, claimed them as his own property, and sold them to all who stood in need of them.

It was the nonsense and knavery of such doctrines, together with the infamous trade of retailing indulgences and pardons, that offended all sober, honest, and sensible men, and contributed greatly to bring on the reformation. But the zeal of the reformers against such abuses seems to have inclined some of them towards the contrary extreme, to depreciate good works, and to set up faith in opposition to them; though Christian faith, rightly understood, always implies Christian obedience.

Lastly, That self-denial which Christ required of his followers, and which he had principally in view, is the renouncing of all those things which concern our worldly interests, and our present situation; such as ease and quiet, popularity, riches, inheritances, preferments, dignities, which we possess or pursue; an attachment

tachment to our native country, the connections of blood, of alliance, and of friendship, and even liberty and life. This is the Christian self-denial.

For though, to speak in philosophical language, these things are for the most part mere ^a externals, and not so properly our own selves, yet it is usual with us all, more or less, to confound them in some manner with ourselves, as no less united to us than the body is to the soul. We consider not ourselves such as we are, divested of these external appendages, but such as our circumstances constitute us. Thus the rich man often views himself rather as rich than as a man; and his abundance and splendour enters chiefly into the notion which he forms of himself. The same holds true of him who hath power, high stations, titles, nobility. Thus we enlarge ourselves in our own imagination; and this is the self that Christ requires us to deny, to renounce, and to put off.

But what! Is a Christian then forbidden to possess these things, or to have any regard for them? so superstitious people have thought, as I observed to you before. But these over-

^a Τα ἑξω. Τα ἐκ τῶν ἡμῶν.

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righteous men strained beyond all reason the words of their Master which were sufficiently strict of themselves. When God giveth abundantly the good things of this life, it is that men may enjoy them with gratitude and discretion. So says reason; so says revelation.

Indeed in the first ages of Christianity, it was hardly possible for a Christian to escape persecution; and then this precept was to be observed in the strictest sense. But in times of tranquillity, and in Christian countries, men not only are not obliged to quit the good things which Providence, industry, and honesty bestow upon them, but ought to use them in such a manner as shall promote the glory of God and the public welfare.

We may add, that there is a way of renouncing or denying them, in the moral sense, without forsaking them; and that is, to entertain moderate affections for them, to possess them, according to the apostle's expression, as though we possessed them not, never to prefer them to our known duty in any instance, and to be ready actually to part with them, if God should require it.

So then, there is a difference between renouncing what we possess, and forsaking what

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S E R M O N V. 101

we possess. A man may renounce a thing, without forsaking it; and he may forsake it, without renouncing it.

He renounces this world's goods, who though he retains them, esteems them no more than they deserve, employs them as he ought, and sets not his heart upon them. He may be said to forsake them without renouncing them, who parts from them indeed, but with much reluctance and regret. To give up a present advantage, or to endure a present detriment, for the sake of duty, is a pious and an honourable act; but if a man doth it with an ill grace, if his heart go not along with his deeds, if he afterwards mourn over his loss, he spoils the best part of his obedience, and he quite sinks the value of it, since God requires from us more the mere act of compliance, and loveth the cheerful giver. Therefore, according to the apostle's direction, Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive your reward.

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S E R M O N VI.

JEREMIAH X. II.

Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that made not the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

AT the time when Jeremiah delivered the prophecy which is contained in the words of the text, the king of Babylon had already taken and plundered Jerusalem, and had carried away Jehoiakin, and all the most considerable of the inhabitants captives to Babylon, and had made Zedekiah king, and left him to rule over the poor remains of the Jews. But Zedekiah rebelled against him; upon which Jeremiah foretold the ruin of Jerusalem,

lem, and declared that those Jews who should escape destruction should go into captivity, and follow their brethren.

The prophet therefore in this chapter directs his discourse to the Jews, as to persons who either already were captives, or would soon be in that state; he warns them particularly against idolatry, as knowing that they would lie under strong temptations of falling into that crime by dwelling in the midst of an idolatrous and a prosperous people; he teaches them how they should behave themselves in their captivity; namely, that they should not learn the way of the heathen where they should be carried; that they should not, like those pagan nations, be dismayed at the signs of heaven; that is, that they should not be frightened at eclipses and comets, or regard the predictions which the Chaldean astrologers made upon those occasions; and that they should not reverence their gods of gold and silver, who could do neither good nor harm.

But lest they should think that they had sufficiently acquitted themselves of their duty, if they abstained from the practices of the pagans, he tells them that they must do more than this, that they must make open profession of
their

their own religion, and confess themselves the servants of God, and say to the Babylonians; The gods that made not the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. This they were to declare to the Babylonians; and it is remarkable that, though the prophecies of Jeremiah are written in Hebrew, these words of the text are in another tongue, in the Chaldee language, which was spoken at Babylon.

But that we may do justice to this precept given them by the prophet, we should interpret it according to the rules of prudence and of decency. The Jews were captives; the Babylonians were their conquerors and their masters. Such being the situation and the condition of the Jews it was necessary for them by a discreet and civil, and humble and dutiful behaviour, to oblige the king whose subjects they were, and the nation where they now dwelt. Accordingly Jeremiah, in another place, gives them this command; Thus saith the Lord to the captives of Babylon, Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. It is not to be supposed that the Jews should
openly

openly and continually talk against the religion of the land, and publicly revile the gods of the Babylonians, which must have provoked the people to destroy them, or at least, to detest them and use them ill.

And indeed the Jews, when they were dispersed amongst the gentiles, and had more intercourse with them than they used to have in their own country, learned this part of prudence, to content themselves with serving God after their own way, and not to rail at the established religions in the countries where they dwelt as strangers. This complaisance they carried afterwards too far in one point; for we find in Josephus that he and the Jews in his time, to ingratiate themselves with the Greeks and Romans, pretended that Moses had given them this law; *Tbou shalt not blaspheme the gods which other nations worship, nor rob their temples.* Thus they thought fit to interpret the twenty-eighth verse of the twenty-second chapter of Exodus, which we translate; *Tbou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.* By gods are to be understood magistrates, who are elsewhere called gods in scripture; and in the margin of our Bible it is rendered, *Tbou shalt not revile the judges.*

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This passage therefore was misrepresented by the Jews, purely to procure the good-will of the pagans.

In religious disputes zeal is very apt to go beyond its bounds, and by so doing to defeat its own purpose. The ancient Christians perhaps were not quite free from some blame, for reviling and ridiculing the pagan gods and the pagan worship, whilst they themselves lived under pagan government. But in their justification two things ought to be remarked; first, that the pagan religion was so trifling, absurd, and abominable, that it was impossible to represent it truly without seeming to deride and detest it; and secondly, that the pagan moralists and philosophers had led the way and shewed the example, and had treated their own popular religion as contemptuously and as severely as it was possible for the Christians to do. This surely goes a great way towards excusing them.

It is observable that the zeal of the apostles was ever accompanied with perfect discretion. St. Paul's speech to the idolatrous Athenians is a remarkable instance of it, in which he bespeaks their favour, by not reviling their religious rites, but by defending the doctrine of

one God and Father of all from the testimony of their own approved writers.

In the disputes between reasonable men, and enthusiastical bigots, the latter are ever complaining that they are treated with scorn and ridicule. But how can that be helped, if a bare recital of their absurd notions and practices makes them appear silly and contemptible? The way to escape ridicule is, Not to be ridiculous.

After all, it must be confessed that ridicule is not the proper test of truth and falsehood; and that the most probable way to reclaim men from their errors is to treat them gently, and not to exasperate them by scorn and insult. Both the wise and the unwise expect civility; and good usage is the best way to tame either man or beast.

There is a medium between frantic zeal and sinful compliance, according to which the precept given to the Jews in the text may fairly be interpreted. We may then suppose that the prophet's instruction amounts to this; Beware of idolatry, and be not led away to do like the people where you dwell. If at any time they endeavour to seduce you from your duty, and tempt you to worship their Gods, give

them this answer; The prophet Jeremiah fore-
told all the calamities which have fallen upon
us, and all the victories which your king hath
gained, as you well know. He hath command-
ed us to say thus to you; There is one God,
the creator of all things, who alone ought to be
adored. As to other gods, who are honoured
by the mistaken Gentiles, and who made not
the heavens and the earth, they shall perish
from the earth and from under these heavens.
A time shall certainly come when they shall
no longer receive divine honours, but be cast
aside and forgotten, and God alone shall be ex-
alted and served.

From the words thus explained several obser-
vations arise, which I shall proceed to lay before
you.

I. God expects from us that we should ac-
knowledge before men our faith and belief in
him upon all proper occasions; and that upon
no pretence, and for the fear of no inconve-
nience and danger, we should deny him, and
act against our conscience. Of the Jews he
required these duties, even when they were
in bondage, cast out into idolatrous nations,
and oppressed by their enemies. And the his-
tory of that people furnishes us with illustrious
examples

examples of some who boldly exposed themselves to destruction, and were miraculously delivered; and of others who endured all kinds of sufferings, and laid down their lives with readiness and resolution, rather than they would renounce their religion.

We may observe, by the way, that the injunction of this duty was to the Jews an indication and an earnest of a future state, in which the sufferings of good men, for the sake of God and of his commandments, should receive a suitable recompense.

Our life is the gift of God, and he may bestow it upon certain conditions, and oblige us to lay it down in his service. But the natural consequence of life is the love of life, and an unwillingness to resign it, which cannot be overcome except by plain and powerful motives. If there were no future state, or if we expected none, these motives to quit our present and our only being would prove weak, and it would seem hard and unaccountable that God should permit wicked men to prosper and to persecute, and require good men to lose their lives rather than to forsake his laws. The Jews had many proofs and instances of God's goodness and power and justice and wisdom in
his

his dealings with their nation, and in their sacred books; and therefore they had reason to conclude that they who endured afflictions and death for righteousness' sake should be rewarded for it in another state.

Our Saviour who had the words of eternal life, who offered a divine support under difficult trials, and who promised a thousand fold for any thing that should be lost or endured upon his account, might justly require a bold and open profession of faith from his followers. His command on this occasion is strict and express accompanied with great encouragement and with severe threatnings. He that denies me before men, him will I deny before my Father. Whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words before this sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes to judgment: but he who confesses me before men, him will I acknowledge before my Father.

The doctrine of suffering for the sake of religion hath been in a manner peculiar to the Jews and Christians. The Gentiles had no notion of such an adherence to their religion, as it stood established amongst them by laws and customs. They were ready enough to exert

exert their power and authority in defence of it, but not to suffer for its sake. As to morality, or every thing that is decent and honest, this the better sort of them held in veneration; but for the worship of their gods, and their religious rites and ceremonies, they looked upon them as on political institutions, to be held sacred only for the good of society. Therefore they hated and despised the Christians for refusing to comply with such customs, and persecuted them without remorse, whilst the Christians endured it with constancy and courage. But when Christianity was established, and the Christians began to persecute the pagans, paganism soon drooped, and fell to nothing, and its professors had no inclination to be martyrs.

Christians, howsoever differing in other points, have at all times agreed that it was unlawful to forsake and renounce their religion for any pretence. Hence they should have learned this plain consequence, that it is likewise unlawful to use violence towards others. Even a good intention in such oppressors cannot excuse such vile practices. But it is certainly true, that, except a few heated and ignorant zealots, persecutors in general act not out of

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pious views, and have at the bottom no religion at all, but like the pagans of old, look upon it as a political contrivance, and value it only for the sake of some temporal advantages.

If our Saviour insisted upon this proof of obedience from his followers even in days of great distress and danger, much more is it required of those Christians who live in peaceable times, and in countries where the gospel is established, that they make an open profession of their religion, and that they betray not the sacred cause of virtue and piety, as some do, through a wicked shame of being thought good and conscientious, when they fall in company with loose and profane persons, or want to recommend themselves to the favour of such men. Hypocrisy, or a feigned appearance of piety, is a sort of acknowledgment that goodness is excellent and commendable; and therefore, bad as it is, yet seems not so bad as this other sort of hypocrisy, which is a feigned appearance of impiety. Such base dissimulation of religion amounts to a confession that religion is mean and ridiculous, and not fit to show her face in good company. How far we should be active in defending the cause of God

and of goodness, and in rebuking scoffers and transgressors, is a point which varies greatly, and depends upon situation, circumstances, time, place, and persons concerned; and here the rules of decency and prudence are to be consulted. But all compliances with sin are sinful, and are, generally speaking, too sure and evident indications that Christianity possesses the least and lowest place in the affections of such persons.

II. I observe that it is the duty of every one to promote virtue and religion in others to the utmost of his power. The Jews are exhorted in the text, when they had a favourable opportunity to inculcate the belief of one God, maker of heaven and earth; and to do them justice in this point they were not slothful and remiss in recommending and spreading their religion. Pagan writers have taken notice of this their zeal, and the mouth of truth itself hath said of them that they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, though they made him at the same time worse than he was before. And amongst Christians it often happens that they are most in earnest who have the least to say for themselves, and take the most pains to spread their foolish notions; while

they whose religion is reasonable are cold and indolent in a good cause.

We are taught by our Saviour to pray daily that the kingdom of God and of Christ may come; in which words we pray that the gospel of Christ may flourish more and more, and that the number of his subjects may increase continually. We should therefore take care that our actions accompany our words and wishes, and in all stations and circumstances of life we should endeavour to encourage and promote the religion which we profess. If our desires to do this be earnest, and our behaviour be upright, we shall in some measure succeed; for goodness is of its own nature communicative, and it commands love and respect, and on both accounts it will have some weight and influence.

III. The words of the text are directed to an unhappy people, stripped of their possessions, surviving the destruction of their fellow-citizens, cast out of their own land, carried into captivity by their proud conquerors, and seemingly forsaken of God. These persons are exhorted to make profession of their faith, and to hold fast their religion. If we apply this direction to ourselves, we may learn that we

ought in time of affliction to honour God, and submit to the dispensations of his providence. By this behaviour we both recommend ourselves to God's favour, and do signal service to religion, more service perhaps than we can do in the midst of health and strength, and wealth and prosperity; we shew that it hath a due influence upon our hearts, and supports and comforts us when all other succours fail and forsake us, and is to us in the stead of every thing else; and therefore is the most valuable of all possessions.

IV. The next observation arising from the words of the text is, that God may be known by his works, and that the human understanding may discover, upon a serious and careful examination, that there is one God, maker and governor of the universe; that all other gods beside him are gods which made not the heavens and the earth, that is, no gods in reality.

The same proofs which shew that there is any god, shew that there is one supreme God, and that the world cannot be the work of many deities, distinct and distant from each other, and consequently greatly limited in power, knowledge, wisdom, and goodness.

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Ingenious and studious persons have proposed various arguments to prove the being and the perfections of God, which all deserve to be esteemed; and their variety hath its use; for amongst the different tempers of men, one shall be moved and persuaded by a reason which will not have the same effect upon another. But of all these arguments that which is the plainest and the most popular seems also to be the best, namely, 'the disposition of this visible world, which neither could form itself, nor be formed by a variety of creators. This is the argument constantly used by the sacred writers. Next to this I should place the consent of mankind in all times and places, who have thus far agreed that there must be a God, one or more. This may be called the voice of nature; though here and there an atheist hath sprung up, as now and then a monster is produced, and yet the course of nature is said to continue.

Both these arguments are used by the Psalmist, when he says; The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another. There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard

amongst them. Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world.

The Gentiles acknowledged one supreme Lord and Father, the former and ruler of all things. But their error was this, that they imagined many inferior gods, to whom the care and government of the earth and earthly affairs was in a manner entirely committed. These they worshipped, and paid them the honour which should have been given, as it was due, to God alone.

They seem to have been led into this error not so much by false reasonings, as by old tradition; their ancestors had believed so for many ages backward; and this deprivation arose from the corruption of a true doctrine, of one God and of many angels, who under him had the care of human affairs, and who were his messengers and ministers. But when men proceeded to pay divine honours to these inferior spirits, and to forget their Creator, God gave them up to illusions, and they fell lower and lower into the grossest idolatries.

To retrieve men from this state of ignorance, God first made use of the Jews, who in their various dispersions and settlements contributed

in some measure to introduce the knowledge of one God; and afterwards by his Son, he more gloriously and effectually spread true religion over the earth.

V. For lastly, the words of the text are a most illustrious and remarkable prophecy that the gods of the Gentiles who were then adored should intirely perish, and consequently that the honour which had been paid to them should be given to God alone. The gods that made not the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens. Concerning which words two things are to be considered; first, the state of the times when the prophecy was delivered; secondly, the manner and degree in which it hath been accomplished.

First, It was a time when the knowledge of the true God was confined to very narrow bounds, and his dominion was almost become invisible. The ten tribes had been dispersed into remote countries, whence they never returned, and the poor remains of Judah were led captives to Babylon. The worship of God was in a manner confined to the Jews, and the Jews themselves often fell into the idolatries of their neighbours, by which and other national

sins they brought upon themselves these judgments. Upon many accounts then, and according to human probability, it seemed more to be expected that the Jews together with their religion should perish, than that the Gentiles should forsake their idolatry.

Secondly, Concerning the accomplishment of the prophecy, we may observe that it hath been in a great measure manifested. For the gods of the Gentiles so often mentioned in sacred and profane history, the gods of Europe and Asia, of Greece and Italy, the gods of Babylon, and of all the nations surrounding the Jews, and with which the Jews were so often concerned, have intirely perished. Their bare names are recorded in ancient writings, but they have not one temple or one worshiper on the face of the earth. This great event hath been produced by the gospel, first by the preaching of the apostles, secondly at the time of Constantine, and thirdly a few ages afterwards.

But the descriptions which the prophets have made of this revolution are so magnificent, that they seem not yet to have received a total completion. It is generally and justly supposed that a more glorious age shall come; when

when the Jews shall be converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall flow in the church, and the kingdom of the earth shall be the kingdoms of Christ; when spiritual tyranny shall be abolished; when the gospel shall be farther spread, and better understood, and more religiously observed; for which happy renovation it becomes every Christian earnestly to wish, and to pray that God's kingdom may thus come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven*.

* Jos. Mede hath a discourse on this subject, from which some of these remarks are borrowed.

S E R M O N VII.

LUKE ix. 56.

*The Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives,
but to save them.*

OUR Saviour was travelling with his disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem to keep the passover there. His way laying through a village of the Samaritans, he sent some of his company before him, to go and prepare lodging and entertainment. But the Samaritans, who were at extreme variance with the Jews upon a religious account, would not receive him. They were vexed, in all probability, that so celebrated a prophet and teacher, as he was reported to be, should thus decide the controverted question against them, by going to wor-
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ship at the temple of Jerusalem rather than at their temple.

Upon this rude and inhospitable behaviour, two of Christ's disciples, James and John, were so provoked that they said; Lord, wilt thou that we call down fire from heaven to consume them, even as Elias did? The prophet Elias had in this miraculous manner destroyed two captains, with all their soldiers, who were sent to take him.

But Christ turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives but to save them. That is, You think yourselves actuated by a religious zeal for God, and for your Master; but you are much mistaken. Yours is a zeal without knowledge and without discretion, a mere human passion carried to excess. I am not sent for such exploits, nor is my character and my kingdom to be thus supported and defended. I am not come to distress men or to shorten their days, but to give them every blessing that tends to prolong life, and to make it comfortable.

Thus we evidently see in the words and in the behaviour of Christ a direct condemnation of

of all violence and persecution on account of a mere diversity of religious sentiments, or on account even of false doctrine, heresy and schism, attended with want of civility and want of charity; for these Samaritans were guilty of all these faults, in some measure. The honour of the Messias, the honour of God himself, of true religion, of Jerusalem, and of the temple, the appointed place of God's worship, were all concerned in this case: and such a signal punishment inflicted upon the Samaritans might have recommended Christ to the favour of the Jews, and have made them more disposed to receive his gospel, and to own him for their Messias. So that his disciples seemed to have a plausible pretence to call for divine judgments upon this village and its insolent inhabitants; yet he warmly rebuked and utterly condemned this spirit of revenge and severity.

Ever since we of this nation have been released from the cruel and ignominious bondage of popery and of arbitrary power; we have from time to time been alarmed with fears of losing, our religious and civil liberties, and of relapsing into our former slavery.

The controversy and contention between us and the Romanists hath been continued, more
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or less, ever since; they have been occupied in drawing away our people and making proselytes, and we in preventing it as far as we have been able. Much hath been written on both sides, and the divines of our church have signalized themselves by many learned and judicious treatises.

This controversy, I should think, might be brought to a speedy determination by one single argument, founded upon historical and undeniable matter of fact; the force of which may be felt by any rational creature without much study and deep reflection, and even at the first hearing. It is this;

The Romish church hath absolved subjects from their oaths of allegiance, and princes from their oaths, contracts, and promises made to their subjects; hath deposed kings, and given their crowns to others; hath violated public faith; hath excited civil wars; hath set nation against nation; hath established inquisitions; hath encouraged massacres and assassinations; hath slain millions, purely for the support of its own religion, and for the destruction of those who dissent from it. This is a system directly contrary to the laws of nature and of morality; directly contrary to the precepts of the gospel, and to
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the example of Christ. There needs no other argument than this to convince an honest, though an ignorant person, that he ought not to hold communion with a tyrannical and blood-thirsty church; which, setting aside all that may be objected to her doctrines, hath destroyed more Christians than all the pagan persecutions put together.

Happy had it been for the Christian world, if these persecutors had proceeded no farther than to imitate that intemperate zeal which was shewed by the two disciples whom Christ rebuked; If at the time of the reformation, when multitudes of heretics and schismatics, as they called them, arose in all places, the Romanists had addressed themselves to God in solemn prayer, and devoutly called for fire from heaven to consume the Protestants. They might have called long enough and loud enough, like the idolatrous priests mentioned in the Old Testament, who cried from morning till evening, O Baal, hear us; and they would have met with the same disappointment. But instead of doing so they kindled the fire themselves, they fetched their fire from hell to burn the heretics.

As the impetuous request of Christ's disciples was to destroy the Samaritans, our Saviour's answer, that he came not to destroy mens ^a *souls*, or *lives*, but to save them, must relate principally, if not solely, to this present state; and he must be understood to affirm that he came to preserve the bodies as well as the souls of men.

His own behaviour is the best commentary upon this affirmation; for during his whole ministry, he went about doing good, and healing all that were sick, infirm, and diseased; enjoining mutual love, charity, patience, long-suffering, and the forgiveness of injuries; filling the hungry, as when he fed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes; giving drink to the thirsty, as when he turned the water into wine, at the marriage feast; and performing a variety of wonderful works, but all of the merciful and benevolent kind. He never wrought one miracle of severity, though he had so many provocations to do it, and the example of former prophets to justify it. When he sent forth his disciples to go before him, and prepare the people for his reception, the commission was,

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Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, raise the dead. And if the inhabitants of any place would not receive and regard them, they were not to punish them, nor to curse them, but to depart from them, and leave them to their own stubbornness and ingratitude, and to the deserved consequences of their ill behaviour. After his ascension, when the foundation of a Christian church was laid, and multitudes converted, his apostles continued to work many miracles of the benevolent kind, and very few of a severe nature, no more than were absolutely necessary to keep up regularity and discipline in a religious society which was discountenanced and oppressed by the civil powers, and had no temporal jurisdiction and authority to support it.

But this is far from being all that may be collected from the words of our Lord, The Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them. They may justly be understood of his whole doctrine, that it was calculated to be profitable for all things, and to promote the temporal welfare and happiness of all who would comply with it. This is a point which well deserves a particular consideration. Let us therefore proceed to examine distinctly what

are the temporal evils to which mankind is exposed, and how far Christianity, if it were made the steady rule of our conduct, would conduce to remove or to alleviate and lessen those evils.

One of the evils then which have greatly disturbed the peace of nations, and which the text leads me to consider in the first place, hath been the practice of persecution, the enforcing religious opinions upon men by heavy pains and penalties, and oppressing those who dissent from the national system of faith and doctrine. This is claiming a dominion over the conscience, which no earthly power can justly exercise; this is a foolish and a fruitless attempt, since opinions can never be forced upon an unwilling mind; this is a detestable act of tyranny, and the more so, because it wears the mask of zeal and godliness, though that zeal is malice, and that godliness is hypocrisy. Christians would never be guilty of these vile and inhuman practices, if they understood and observed the gospel, which is a system of peace and good-will towards all men. The civil magistrate in a Christian country would then consider himself as the minister of God to execute wrath upon him that doth evil, and to protect

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protect and encourage the virtuous, to correct vice and debauchery, to enforce the practice of the moral and the social duties, and to support the national religion by all honourable, fair, and moderate means; and the teachers of the gospel would never incite and encourage the magistrate to use violence in matters of faith, or to distress his subjects for opinions that have no manifest connection with those crimes which are pernicious to civil society.

Another national calamity and scourge of mankind, which men bring upon themselves, is war, together with all its miserable consequences. This is so evidently one of the forest evils that I shall not spend any words to prove it. War is not always unlawful, as some enthusiasts have pretended; but it is only then lawful when it is absolutely necessary and altogether unavoidable. Self-defence is a part of the law of nature, and Christ came not to destroy that law, but to explain and improve it. Yet in all the wars that are waged, one side is always in fault, and sometimes both; and therefore Christian nations, if they were indeed what they call themselves, would never go to war with each other, though they might sometimes be obliged to war with infidels.

Differences between nations professing Christianity would unavoidably arise, on account of their different views and interests; but then these differences would be fairly discussed and amicably composed, and each side would depart in some measure from its right, for the sake of peace, rather than to have recourse to that cruel remedy.

Another national calamity, which is always produced by vicious causes, is discord, sedition, rebellion, and civil war. This evil sometimes proceeds from the unreasonable discontents of the giddy populace, raised and inflamed by factious and self-interested leaders, who have acquired the ascendent over them. But far more usually, as the history of past ages will inform us, it arises from an illegal and tyrannical administration; for the people, though not always, yet commonly are disposed to be quiet and tractable, when the public good is pursued, and they are not neglected, slighted, pillaged, injured, and oppressed beyond measure. This is a calamity which the Christian religion duly practised would certainly prevent; for then governors would rule with justice and clemency, and subjects would repay these obligations with obedience and gratitude.

Another

Another evil predominant in civil society, is the spirit of litigation, producing vexatious law-suits and spiteful prosecutions, hurting the temper, inflaming the passions, and impairing the fortunes of men, and producing the same effects in a lower degree that war brings upon contending nations, in which usually more is lost than gained even by the conquering side.

They who have condemn'd war as utterly unlawful, have pass'd the same judgment upon law-suits; and indeed St. Paul may seem to favour their opinion, in his epistle to the Corinthians, where he says to them in very positive terms, Now therefore there is utterly a fault in you, that ye go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

But we must so interpret the direction of St. Paul, as to reconcile it, at least, with his own practice. Now he often puts himself under the protection of the Roman law, and claimed his privilege as a Roman citizen, and pleaded his cause before pagan magistrates, and appealed to Cæsar, to escape the hands of his wicked countrymen.

When St. Paul gave this direction to the Corinthians, they, as well as other Christian societies, lived in pagan cities, under pagan government, by which they were sometimes indulged with connivance and toleration, at other times hated, oppressed, and persecuted. He therefore doth not forbid them to go to law with unbelievers, and to appeal to pagan courts of judicature, if they were grievously injured and defrauded by such persons. But he forbids them to go to law with one another, and to carry their causes to those pagan tribunals, which would be a disgrace to them, and bring an evil report upon the religion which they professed. He exhorts them, instead of having recourse to such scandalous methods, to refer all their differences to arbitrators or judges chosen out of their own body, and to submit to their determinations. Now in these days, and in countries where Christianity is established, and the church and the state constitute one and the same community, the apostle's direction, together with the reasons by which he supports it, no longer holds good; and all that can fairly be collected from it is, that Christians should avoid such litigations as far as they possibly can, and bear with

with some inconvenience and detriment rather than have recourse to the laws.

In Christian nations, though they were far more religious than they are, there would ever be a necessity for courts of justice, to decide cases of property, to settle ambiguous points, to explain the common laws, and to mitigate them in some occurrences by decrees of equity. But whatsoever is besides this and beyond this, all barretry and chicanery, all vexatious and frivolous suits, all unfair delays of justice, all partial and unrighteous decrees would never be heard of in a country that observed the laws of Christ,

But moreover, there are national calamities which involve the good and the bad in the same disasters, which God either sends as judgments and corrections, or permits in the course of nature, such as famine, fire, earthquakes, inundations, storms, shipwrecks, losses, intemperate seasons, pestilences, and epidemical diseases. These are evils which if nations cannot prevent or remove, yet they can alleviate in no small degree by national virtue, by a public spirit and a fervent charity. Perhaps, if Christian nations were exact observers of all the precepts of the gospel, perhaps, I say, they

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would be less exposed to these temporal distresses, and God who in former times hath often interposed in behalf of his servants, and whose hand is not shortened, would by the secret operations of his providence, command the elements to be at peace with them, and forbid the destroying angel to smite them. But because the gospel proposes spiritual blessings rather than worldly prosperity to the righteous, we will not presume to lay much stress upon this conjecture; we will suppose that they would not be exempted from these calamities. In such a case, such a nation would exert itself to the utmost of its power, and even beyond its power, for the relief and comfort of the sufferers. Indeed, upon the strictest Christian plan, it would be impossible that all persons should be upon the level, that all things should be open and common to all, and that private property should cease. This is a system most absurd, and destructive of civil society. But then thus much may be affirmed, that there would be none of that excessive disparity of conditions which now prevails, none would be immensely rich, and none would be extremely necessitous; the liberality, the disinterestedness, the piety, the sobriety, and

and the industry of every Christian, in such a community as we are speaking of, would prevent this enormous inequality.

What we have said concerning the temporal effects which the gospel would produce in a Christian nation, is applicable to all its inhabitants, to lesser societies, to families, and to individuals; and if they all were what they ought to be, and what most of them pretend to be, then might it be truly said, Blessed are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.

Thus I hope I have both explained and justified our Saviour's affirmation, That the Son of man came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them. This was the plain tendency of all his precepts; and this would be the effect of them, if they were generally received and followed.

But here it may be very proper to take into consideration an obvious and a plausible objection which some of the more moderate unbelievers will infallibly make to all this. By the more moderate unbelievers, I mean those who speak decently of the Christian morality, and allow its author to have been a philosopher

sopher whose views were disinterested, and who formed a noble design to humanize and civilize mankind. They will say; Speculation is one thing, and practice is another. We will deny that Christianity would accomplish all these good and great effects upon men; but then these men must be men of a different cast and make, a different temper and behaviour from any that can be found upon earth. We are too bad for the Christian system, and it is too good for us. The true Christian is very like the wise man of the stoics, a fiction of the brain, a child of the fancy, a creature of the imagination. And accordingly, What hath the Christian world been from the time of national Christianity to this day? What but a theatre of war, discord, and persecution? What, in a word, but a scene of every folly, every vice, and every calamity? So then the author of this religion plainly failed in his design, and attempted a reformation which experience shews to have been unsuccessful and impracticable. Consequently his doctrine could not be a divine revelation for when God designs to accomplish an end, he always useth the means which will infallibly produce it,

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Thus stands the objection of infidelity; to which I say, Christ the author of this religion, and his apostles the teachers of it, foresaw and foretold all these deviations from its rules. He declared that before his religion could be established, its professors must endure a violent persecution from a wicked world. With a view to this he said; Think not that I am come to send peace upon earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. He compared his own kingdom upon earth to a wide field, in which good seed was sown; but the tares would spring up along with the wheat, the bad would be mixed with the good, and no separation should be made till the end of the world, and the day of judgment and retribution should come.

Other parables he also delivered, tending to the same purpose, to shew that in his church and in the societies professing his religion, there should always be a mixture of real and nominal believers, of righteous and wicked persons, of sincerity and hypocrisy, of true and of false doctrines. His apostles likewise, by the spirit of prophecy, foretold the schisms, heresies, and apostasies, the great corruptions and the great calamities which would ensue in future ages.

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Therefore it cannot without much unfairness and prejudice be said that he was disappointed in his views, or promised more than he was able to perform.

But to come nearer to the point. It was fit that the gospel of Christ, being designed as the final and complete revelation of God's will, should be perfect in all its parts, and also adapted to produce every blessing both spiritual and temporal. The rule ought to be perfect, though being given to imperfect creatures, it will be imperfectly observed. But if it be in some measure complied with, it will be in some measure beneficial, and the benefit will always be exactly proportionable to the compliance. Now this hath ever been the case in the Christian world; and I could easily shew you, if the time would permit, by a variety of instances, that the gospel hath produced some good effects even upon those who received it not, but yet were within the reach of its influence; and that it hath made considerable alterations for the better in the laws and customs, the minds and manners of those nations which have received it; particularly in producing acts of benevolence of what we commonly call charity. There have been dark and corrupt ages of the church,

church, in which other virtues suffered an eclipse, and seem to have failed in a great measure; but charity hath never failed, charity sometimes injudiciously applied, but always well intended.

Indeed it is impossible to suppose that a religion so pure and so peaceable should bring forth none of the fruits of purity and peace, or that such powerful motives as it contains should be entirely ineffectual. The hope of future rewards will produce some degrees of obedience; the fear of future punishment will restrain many from being as wicked as they would else have been. A religious education, and the examples of the good, will always operate in some measure. More than this is not to be expected in the nature of things, and from human nature such as it is.

Having therefore a religion which contains in it every thing necessary to instruct, to direct, to assist, to support, and to encourage us, let us not be wanting on our side to exert our utmost endeavours in well doing, knowing that our honest labour shall not be in vain, either in this life, or in the life to come.

S E R M O N VIII.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.—

THESE words are sufficiently clear and plain; they want no explication. I shall take occasion from them to set before you the important duty, and the singular advantages of an early piety, of serving our Creator in the days of our youth.

I. Though we should begin to serve God even from our youth, our earliest service comes long after his favours. They extend back beyond our memory, and they were continued to us through our weak and helpless infancy. Thus before ever we come to years of discretion, we have contracted a vast debt of gratitude

titude to our Creator and preserver; a debt which might make us very uneasy, because we can never discharge it, if there were not a pleasure in endeavouring to pay it, and if such endeavours were not all that God requires at our hands.

Great reason have we therefore to serve our Creator, as soon as we are capable of knowing our obligations; to meditate upon his favours, and to return him thanks for them; so that neither length of time may wear them, nor worldly affairs drive them out of our minds. This will effectually assist our endeavours to live virtuously; for it is scarcely possible that we should think often of our Benefactor, and return him evil for good.

Nothing, they say, is sooner forgotten than a kindness. But is this a natural infirmity? If we think so, we deceive ourselves. The fault is not in the weakness of our recollection, which seems strong enough in most persons, if it be considered how firmly and faithfully they can remember all the injuries which have ever been done to them. Let us not then employ our memory so perversely as to make it only a storehouse for trifles, and an exact register of every thing which ought to be blotted out
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and allow no place in it for that which we can never sufficiently esteem, and which ought to be always present to us. Let us not disregard Him, in whom we live and move and have our being; of whom we are or ought to be put in mind by every thing within us, and by every thing without us. Let us not think of our duty to him now and then, and be too busy, or too idle, to do it constantly. He doth not so deal with us; he doth not protect us one day, and neglect us another: our returns ought, therefore, to be, in this respect, like his goodness, uniform and uninterrupted.

2. Again: We should serve God in our youth, because that is the way to make the practice of our duty easy to us; and because, if we set out wrong, it is very hard afterwards to amend.

Difficulties there are in a regular obedience; but they will, in a great measure, be lessened and removed by accustoming ourselves to it betimes, whilst the mind hath contracted no bad habits, and before sin, by long indulgence, is grown familiar and bold; for vices, as well as men, have their infancy and childhood, and then they are more easily ruled and restrained.

But when our early days have been ill employed, when it is not only necessary to learn to do well, but also to cease to do evil, the task is difficult indeed; so difficult, that few in those circumstances care even to set about it, and to make the least attempt towards a reformation. They turn their thoughts to things less irksome, and study, not how to deliver themselves from their bad state, but how to conceal it from their own observation. At first, when they found a disposition to depart from their duty, they had no intention, as they imagined, to get a custom of offending, and to become perfect slaves to vice, but only to take a few small licenses, and then to stop, and return to a regular obedience. So thought, and so said many to themselves, who went aside from the right way, and never recovered it again, but were led on insensibly from one fault to another, from bad to worse, and at last lost all inclination, and almost all power, to amend; who, if they had been told at the beginning what a fatal progress they would make in iniquity, would never have believed it possible, and would have turned away with disdain and abhorrence from an image so detestable.

It is true that persons have repented, though late, and have delivered themselves from the bondage of sin. There are examples of it, that none may despair; and those examples are few, that none may presume.

To suppose the best that can happen in such a case; we may mispend and abuse our youth, and we may at last repent and amend. We shall repent; that is, in other words, We shall undergo the sharp pain of grief and remorse, and the anxious fears of departing hence before we have made our peace with God, we shall wish that we had better employed our time, and never think of it without shame and confusion: our first days will have been foolishly thrown away; the rest will be spent in lamenting them. Youth is, in several respects, the most agreeable part of life, or at least it seems so when it is past. There is an eastern proverb which says, The remembrance of youth is a sigh. It may be more truly said, The remembrance of sin is a sigh. Every one finds it so; unless he hath sinned himself out of his senses.

And then, to contend with bad habits is very hard and discouraging. To resist them

is to ^a strive against a swift stream bearing down upon us; to part from them is to cut off our own limbs. All this trouble we may prevent by an early, a gentle, and a gradual improvement, which will require no violent struggles, no painful endeavours; which will be accompanied with no stings of a conscience deeply wounded, no distracting apprehensions of the divine displeasure, sometimes bordering upon despair.

3. We should serve God in our youth, because, as virtue will have the first possession of us, we shall not be able to change for the worse without an uncommon resolution to do ill. The first love is usually the strongest and the most lasting. Our hearts being properly disposed will not easily lose the good impression; and, on any inclination to forsake the right way, our conscience will take the alarm, and will give us timely warning by severe reproaches, which are most felt by those who have least offended, when they are about to commit any fault. This is an advantage which is lost by setting out wrong; for as good dispositions

^a Non aliter quam qui adverfo vix flumine lembum.

Remigio subigit, si brachia forte remissit,

Atque illum in præceps pronò rapit alveus amni.

Virgil.

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wear off, the inward reproofs grow weaker and less frequent, till at last, perhaps, sin takes sure possession of the man, and accompanies him through old age, and to the grave; nor will it leave him there; for, like the soul in which it dwells, it hath a kind of immortality. When we die, our good works, or our bad works, die not. but follow us, and pursue us wherever we go.

4. Youth is also the time when, on several accounts, we are better able to serve God than we are in a more advanced age, if we have neglected our duty before. There are good qualities and favourable dispositions which often accompany it. Thus, in youth properly educated, there is a sincerity not yet lost by the practice of deceit and dissimulation; there is a modesty which is both a guard to virtue, and a check to sinful actions; there is a respect for parents and masters, the natural result of a state of dependence; there is a flexibility and aptness to receive instruction, which lessens as we grow up, if self-love, pride, and conceit, increase faster than understanding and judgment, and make us hasty, obstinate, and perverse; there is, lastly, a lively heat of temper, an activity both of body and mind; which, as it is

dangerous when it is employed in the service of vice, so it can make a speedy progress in virtue.

5. Yet youth, with all its advantages, hath its disadvantages, and is the time when we are the most tempted to forget God; and therefore ought this precept to be inculcated upon that thoughtless age. Young persons frequently judge wrong of happiness, and of the means to obtain it: their senses are more exercised than their understanding; and when reason and appetite are at variance, their inclination is to prefer that which is agreeable to that which is useful; to seize upon that which is present, and to disregard that which is future; they have rarely a just notion of the uncertainty and shortness of human life; the years which they promise themselves seem a long-extended time, which yet, when past, will appear to them like a dream: a certain levity of mind inclines them to reject grave thoughts and meditations; and therefore ought they to be reminded and exhorted not to delude themselves, where virtue and religion are concerned, nor to slight good advice, nor to be impatient of just reproof, nor to think it the privilege of youth to commit faults, and the business of en-

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living years to correct and amend them. " Re-
 joice, O young man, in thy youth, says Solomon,
 and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of
 thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart,
 and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou
 that for all these things God will bring thee
 into judgment." The latter part of the sentence
 explains the former, and shews that the wise
 man's words contain no permission to spend
 our first days in folly and iniquity, but a scorn-
 ful and severe reproof of such pernicious prac-
 tices.

9. If there be joy in heaven over a sinner
 who repents, and God in the scripture be re-
 presented under the image of the father in
 the parable, running forth to meet, and to
 embrace, his lost son as soon as he returns, yet
 it is very reasonable to conclude that the son,
 who from his youth serves and never leaves his
 heavenly Father must be dearer to him. In
 the parable now mentioned, when the elder
 son was jealous and uneasy at the extraordinary
 favour shewed to his unworthy brother, the
 father tells him; Son, thou art always with
 me, and all that I have is thine; intimating
 that though the unexpected return of his lost
 son was cause of great joy and exultation to
 him

him, yet he who had never offended him had the first place in his settled esteem. After we have sought happiness where happiness is not to be found, then to condemn our folly, to consider, to amend, and to bring forth the fruits of repentance, is a wise part. But it is a wiser and a more generous behaviour to serve God before we have served other masters, not driven to him as to a last refuge, by afflictions, or disappointments, or by an immediate sense of danger, or by a weariness and dislike of the world.

7. Another reason for which youth should be well spent, is the uncertainty of life. It is not only the most proper and the most acceptable time to enter into the service of God, but perhaps the only time allotted to us. We should reckon it as such, knowing that we cannot promise to ourselves length of days; and that if we be cut off in the noon, or in the morning, it is no more than what we might reasonably have supposed. Such examples of mortality perpetually present themselves to us, and silently reproach us for depending upon days which are not our own.

8. Lastly. We should serve God in our earlier days, with a view to the ensuing days, which

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which we may expect in the course of our life. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, says Solomon, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. They will certainly come, sooner or later, unless sudden death prevent them; and therefore, if we be wise, we shall in our youth, before they overtake us, prepare to meet them, and provide ourselves all the assistances which we can procure to lessen those evils, and to support and comfort us under them.

Let us then see what the length of time may bring forth,

We may suffer disappointments and losses; we may be exposed to envy and calumny, to insolence and injustice; we may outlive the persons who are dearest to us; we may behold them unfortunate and distressed, and not be able to relieve them; or, which is most afflicting, we may see them change for the worse in their temper and conduct, and outlive their good dispositions.

We may be visited with sickness. It is too weak an expression to say that this may be: it is folly to expect that we shall escape it.

Old

Old age is a period, which, at a distance, we both desire and dislike. That is, of two evils we judge it to be the lesser, and would prefer it to a short life; and when we come to it, we often find it to be, as the Psalmist calls it, labour and sorrow.

The day of our dissolution will be to us an evil day if our conscience do not acquit us, and reconcile us in some measure to that great change, by giving us hopes of forgiveness, and of peaceful abodes in a better world. That is the solemn hour, when hypocrisy usually drops the mask, and when borrowed virtues disappear.

All these evil days may come, and therefore it is prudence to lay up for ourselves supports and assistances which may make them tolerable, and which will continue with us when all other things forsake us. And what can they be, unless the favour of God, and the sense of a life spent in laudable industry, in acquiring useful knowledge, in discharging our duty to our Creator, in doing kind offices to our neighbour, in amending our faults, and improving in virtue? These are a treasure of which force and fraud cannot deprive us; which lies out of the reach of all enemies, and all accidents.

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The calamities which fall upon us will then lose much of their weight; old age will be unto us only a nearer approach to everlasting youth; and we shall meet death, if not with cheerfulness, at least with decency and resignation. - It is indeed natural to us to dislike a dissolution; but, after all, the sting of death is sin; and therefore it is that many start at it, who are even weary of life, and would willingly lie down and sleep a perpetual sleep.

To these convincing reasons for an early piety, I shall only add this, that it is in no respect hard and burdensome. Youth is cheerful; and so is religion. By living virtuously, they are deprived of nothing that is desirable, and only shun those things which are usually attended with bad consequences even for the present; by living virtuously, they will probably live the longer, since most vices are no less enemies to the body than to the soul. Whatsoever affords innocent diversion is not forbidden them; whatsoever tends to qualify them for their several stations in the world, not only is not prohibited, but is absolutely required. Nature, necessity, reason, revelation, interest, honour, custom, call them to industry; and industry is ever sprightly and entertaining, brings
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a quick and varied succession of objects to the senses, and of ideas to the mind, and so more effectually excludes dejection, moping, and melancholy than any frivolous or expensive recreation.

Such are the motives which we have to enter betimes and without delay into the service of God, motives suited to the lowest capacity, and yet not beneath the consideration of the most exalted genius. Whosoever despiseth them, and neglects the duty to which they excite, is a fool, whatsoever his abilities are; a fool according to the language of the Scriptures, which give that name to all who are irreligious; and they themselves will own that they deserve it, when they are about to go hence. Is it not, for example, foolish to wish for impossibilities? And yet, ^b the wish that they had their days to spend over again, will, in all probability, be frequently in their minds; they will recollect what they would be glad to forget; and their sins will rise to haunt them. A man's memory and conscience is not like his common-place-book, where he may blot out what he pleases.

^b O mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos!

Εἰς τὸς ἡμετέρας, Κύριε δὲ πατρὶς ἔπειτα δὲ αἰών—

I shall add a few remarks of general use and concern.

1. The first shall be addressed to those who have outlived the years of youth.—And here I know not whether I may observe, that if to those who are young indeed we should add all those who are young in their own imagination, the number would be considerably increased. The early days of life silently and swiftly steal from us, and we perceive it not. But when this short spring is past, a second spring ensues, created by fancy, and kept up by vanity; and so unwilling are we to grow old, that we must be stricken in years and infirmities before we can be fully sensible that youth is fled. It were to be wished that they who delude themselves in this childish manner, would also think that they are the persons to whom Solomon addresseth himself when he says, Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth; for then some good would perhaps arise from these illusions of self-love. But they who have outlived, and who are sensible that they have outlived the years of youth, should not imagine that they have no farther concern with the doctrine of the text. It would be a strange and a sad mistake to think so. They are no

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less interested in it than the young. What was once their duty to do, continues always matter for their recollection and meditation. If those days are ^c gone, yet the account remains which is to be given of them; and this suggests matter for humble gratitude, or for serious repentance, according as their past behaviour hath been. For repentance, I say, but by no means for despair; for as it is never too early, so, in some sense, it is never too late to serve God. No acts of amendment and of obedience can be altogether unprofitable: they are infinitely better at any time of life than an hardened and obstinate impenitence, and by being continued and repeated they become still more profitable. In my Father's house, says our Lord, there are many mansions; and it is to be hoped that some of the lower kind are allotted to the penitent, to beings which are curable, and capable of farther improvement.

2. The importance and advantage of serving God in our youth shew us the inestimable value of a good education, and consequently the obligation which lies upon us to take care of those who are placed under our tuition, and

^c Pereunt, et imputantur.

subject

subject to our authority. Whilst we give them that kind of instruction and assistance which may enable them to prosper in this life, we should have a more particular regard to that sacred knowledge, and those good dispositions, which whosoever enjoys may adorn the highest station, and will be resigned and contented in the lowest; will have his Creator for his friend, and the kingdom of heaven for his inheritance. Certain it is that the love of God, of virtue, and of mankind, the knowledge of Christianity, the government of the passions, the improvement of the understanding, the approbation of the conscience, and the hopes of eternal life, are of more value than any thing that this poor world can give or take away. Little need, one would think, there should be to convince Christians of these truths; yet too many of them behave themselves, in this respect, as if our Saviour had said, Seek ye first the things of this world, and the favour thereof, and all things else shall be added unto you.

3. They who in their youth have been permitted to contract bad habits, and scarcely received any knowledge of religion, must not think that the fault belongs altogether to those who have neglected them, or set them bad examples,

examples, and that they may continue in the same evil courses with little guilt and danger. Their parents or masters might be inexcusable, yet they themselves are no less to be blamed: for besides that in a Christian country every person hath opportunities to hear and to learn the principal parts of his duty, God hath also provided for us a guide in our own breast. Though parents, relations, and friends, falsely so called, should bestow upon us no counsel, no help, no instruction, God hath given us a father and mother, a friend and a teacher, in our own reason and conscience. Unless we offer them great and repeated violence, they will pass a true judgment upon most occasions of importance, approving what is honest and good, and condemning what is base and profligate.

4. They who have been blessed with a liberal, a sober, and a virtuous education, who have been induced and encouraged to the practice of all that is useful and commendable by diligent instruction and domestic example, must not forget that they are of the number of those to whom much hath been given, and of whom as our Saviour says, much shall be required. If they become disobedient servants to God

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wicked or even useless members of society, they are altogether without excuse. They ought to shew their thankfulness to the Almighty, by industriously improving the talents committed to them; and, next to God, they ought to honour and love those, who, by taking care to adorn their minds, and to direct their thoughts to proper objects, and to shew them the way to peace and happiness, have laid upon them an obligation which ought always to be gratefully acknowledged, and can never be fully repaid. To such parents and friends the warmest affection is due whilst we possess them, and a dear remembrance when they are taken from us.

THE application of the subject to the present occasion is obvious. From the observations which have been made concerning the advantages of an early piety, and of timely instruction, it follows that we ought to take some care of the helpless children of our fellow-christians and fellow-citizens.

To our charity schools objections have been made by different sorts of persons.

Some there were who had no dislike to the scheme, but only to the way in which it was

conducted, and used to complain that the children were not inured sufficiently to labour, and received an education too polite, and above the condition which probably would be their lot in the world. To these points a due regard, I believe, hath been paid, and care taken that what was exceptionable should be removed. But I must say that these complaints have been carried too far: for to read well, to write a legible hand, to know so much arithmetic as serves to keep a small account, and to be skilled in such needlework as is necessary in families; these are accomplishments proper enough even for the lowest stations. They may prove very profitable to a poor person, and they cannot well be detrimental.

The other sort of complainers were such as disliked the thing in any shape; and among these there were some dissolute and profligate persons, who, by their conversation, manners, and writings, used their utmost endeavours to debauch the age. These men were grieved that children should be educated at no small expense in superstitious prejudices, and taught to expect a future state, to reverence the ten commandments, to believe the gospel, and other things of that kind, which were not

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amongst their articles of faith, nor to be found in the fool's creed, who saith, There is no God. The enmity of these persons might be accounted no small recommendation of charity-schools, which must be good for something, because they had the honour to be hated and reviled by men who were good for nothing.

It hath been also said that these children, when they grow up, often misbehave themselves. In truth, it is with them as with those of a better rank. It is no uncommon thing to see children, who have been carefully brought up, take bad courses, and prove the shame and the sorrow of their parents. And yet no wise parent ever thought this a proper reason to neglect the education of his own. An honest education may be thrown away; but no good can result from a bad one, or from none at all. What can you expect from a child who hath no other school than the streets, the highways, and houses of drunkenness and debauchery?

A general neglect of the education of youth would be like a poisonous blast in the spring, destroying the hopes of a future harvest. It is our duty and our wisdom to use all probable and practicable methods to preserve them from

themselves, and from the various attacks of those who lie in wait to corrupt and to deceive.

The age in which we live hath been an age of public charities, and compassionate projects, starting up one after another. Mistake me not: I have no intention to depreciate and slight any of these schemes. They are designed for honest and humane purposes; and may the success be answerable to the design! But let not these modern institutions lessen and damp your regard for those of an older date. Give us leave, at least, to hint this necessary caution, since great are the charms of novelty; and there are modes and fashions in charities, as well as in dresses. We cannot plead a better cause than that of poor children. They cannot plead for themselves; and they must be supported, or they must be undone.

The rich and the poor, say the scriptures, meet together; the Lord is the maker and the father of them all, and regards them not according to their stations, but according to their moral qualities. But as to this world, it is not so. The rich have many advantages of which the poor are deprived. To lessen this excessive disparity, and this grievous discouragement, it is highly

highly fit that the children of the poor should have an opportunity or a chance of bettering their hard condition. This is in some measure effected by our charity schools, in which they who are well-disposed receive such helps as will qualify them for useful and profitable employments. They may soon discern that the only sure way to thrive is obedience to their teachers and to their masters; civility, industry, emulation, sobriety, and honesty; and doubtless many there are, and there have been, who, by the advantage of this education, have raised themselves above want and dependence, and by many ways have repaid their country for the care which she took of them.

They who have condemned charity schools, have also reproached the clergy for being their chief advocates. We acknowledge the charge, and are not ashamed of the accusation. Indeed we lie under particular obligations to promote the support and the instruction of youth, because we ourselves owe what we are to the liberality, or to the charity, call it which you please, of our pious ancestors and benefactors. For as these inferior seminaries are designed for the poorest of the people; so our more eminent public schools, our universities, and our colleges,

leges, were founded and endowed for a more liberal education, and were principally designed for those who were in a middle state between poverty and wealth. And to these kind assistances the far greater part of us, and of the other two learned professions, are indebted for our situation in life. So that our Saviour's admonition comes home to us; Go and do thou likewise.

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S E R M O N IX.

2 PETER i. 5, 6, 7.

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity.

THE exhortation in the text seems sufficiently clear; but when we take a distinct view of its parts, we find three points which deserve to be particularly considered.

I. First, for what reason faith is placed at the head of Christian morality.

II. Secondly, what is meant by those qualities called virtue and knowledge, which must be added to our faith.

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III. Thirdly,

III. Thirdly, how the following virtues, temperance, patience, and the rest, are connected together, and flow from the preceding good qualities.

1. Observe then, first, that as to faith, the apostle doth not exhort his disciples to acquire it, but rather takes it for granted that they possess it, and supposes it as the foundation already laid, upon which his exhortation is built, Add to your faith virtue.

• In some places of scripture faith is represented as an accomplishment to which nothing can be added, and as containing in itself every virtue and every good deed. It is called faith working by love, or faith accompanied with hope and charity, and this makes a true Christian; this is a complete victory over the world, over every obstacle to righteousness.

If amongst those who profess themselves Christians too many are to be found who are covetous, ambitious, proud, dishonest, lovers of unlawful pleasures, and slaves to irregular passions, these persons are so far from possessing faith in its utmost extent, faith working by love, that they can hardly be said to have it in any sense.

• L'Enfant, *Serm. I.*

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The persons to whom St. Peter speaks were believers; they had faith, they had persevered in it. Some of them had the honour of suffering for it, and undergoing ill usage both from Jews and Gentiles. He considers them as already persuaded of the truth of Christianity, and seriously engaged in that holy calling. But he judged it expedient to exhort them to a careful observation of all Christian duties; for as a perfect faith comprehends them all, so a faith begun and carried on requires them all, and is a sufficient motive and inducement to the practice of them. The natural effect of faith is to excite pious fear and humble hope, and to give the prospect of a sure and ample reward. And when once these considerations have had their due influence upon the mind, nothing seems wanting to induce a man to a consistent practice. Propose Christian morality to a person unacquainted with the gospel; if he be one of a good disposition, he will allow those duties to be for the most part suitable to his natural apprehensions; and if sometimes difficult to be performed, yet always worthy of approbation and esteem. But in one who is already persuaded of the truth of the gospel, a much greater impression ought surely to be made by the
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the precepts, exhortations and admonitions of a Teacher who is his Lord and master, his Benefactor and Redeemer, his King and his Judge. Add to your faith virtue.

But though the obligations to live suitably to our belief are most manifest and cogent, yet it is a common defect in men not to attend seriously and uniformly to these obligations. I wonder not that our Saviour received with coldness and indifference some persons who came and offered themselves of their own accord to enter into his service. This conduct was worthy of his prudence, his wisdom, and his perfect knowledge of the human heart. Men are frequently restless, rash, inconsiderate, and inconstant. Their unsettled temper makes them seek new opinions and new connections; they love to shift the scene, and to change their condition, and their indiscretion hinders them from foreseeing and weighing the consequences. Christianity hath its fair side: eternal life is a most splendid and agreeable gift, and what would not a man do to obtain it? Sometimes even temporal advantages are annexed to it; and then Christianity becomes still more alluring. Sometimes Christ feeds his followers, and distributes the loaves; and then

the harvest is plenteous, and multitudes come and offer themselves. Sometimes the church doth the same, and her favours find receivers. But they do not consider that sometimes this Son of man and his followers have not where to lay their heads; that believers must on certain occasions take up their cross, and, comparatively speaking, must hate father and mother, children and friends, and possessions, and life itself. Then the zeal is damped, and offence is taken, and there is a great desertion.

But besides these less frequent and ordinary trials, every Christian in every situation is obliged to labour and give all diligence to add to his faith virtue; and this is what many of them do not relish. They have faith, such as it is; and in that they would rest without giving themselves much trouble about the moral duties.

II. Add to your faith virtue. Virtue is a respectable and an amiable name: every knee bends to it, and acknowledges its dignity; and the pagans erected temples to it as to a deity. Every one claims it as his own property and possession; and herein many are strangely mistaken. Their vanity and self-conceit is seen in nothing more than in their pretensions to virtue;

virtue; for it is no common qualification, no cheap acquisition, in what sense soever you take it. Let us consider what St. Peter may be supposed to mean by the virtue which he exhorts us to add to our faith.

First, we may say that by virtue the apostle means goodness in general; of which temperance, piety, charity, are the particular and constituent parts that are afterwards distinctly enumerated in the text. If you thus understand it, there are many who live in a continual illusion and error about it. In one person you shall see covetousness predominate; pride and ambition in another; malice in another; intemperance in another; want of piety in another; and yet each of these shall imagine that he is a man of virtue, and will think it no small injury to be suspected of wanting it. But if virtue be goodness in general, which comprizes and comprehends every particular virtue, it is not enough to possess one or two of them; but he alone is virtuous who hath them all. And as St. James tells us that he who offends in any instance against his neighbour, breaks the whole law, that is the law of charity; so one habitual vice is enough to destroy all pretensions to virtue. A mortifying

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consideration this is to human vanity, because it is undeniably true.

However, we have not yet seen exactly what St. Peter may mean by the word virtue. He had in all probability something more precise and particular in view.

I say then, that amongst various duties comprized under the general name of virtue, there is one which seems to be more particularly implied by it; and that is a probity and uprightness of heart, which is the character of an honest man, who would not do a mean, a base, and unjustifiable action, though he could conceal it from all the world, because he could not bear the reproach of his own heart. Now since probity is the foundation of all the social duties, it is proper to consider it as distinct from them, and to give it its place amongst the good qualities of the mind.

Probity or integrity is an accomplishment which is universally esteemed, and there are few persons so totally profligate as to own themselves void of it. There are faults which seem in common estimation not very odious, and which some are absurd enough even to value in themselves, or at least to account them trifles, pardonable infirmities, and inconsiderable spots.

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Such are prodigality, intemperance, and luxury, which are beheld with so much indifference, that they who offend this way are seldom even ashamed of it. But want of probity carries with it such infamy, and excites such abhorrence, that no one can patiently sit down under the imputation of it. Probity is indeed so much esteemed and respected, that many look upon it as upon a sort of compensation for other defects. It is common to think or to say, I have my faults, but I am an honest man, a man of probity, a man of honour. Yet is not this too often deceiving both ourselves and others? For probity is extensive, uniform, constant, and consistent, and will produce, not a partial but a general regard to the moral duties; and any vicious action, any bad habit, shews a want of probity in some degree and in some particular respect. A man with many defects may so behave himself outwardly and in civil society, as to acquire a fair character; but to be a good man is a sublimer accomplishment. An honest and upright mind resists all temptations, and never sullies its purity by dissimulation, artifice, deceit, and selfishness. Add to your faith virtue; that is, probity and integrity.

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integrity. It is probable that the apostle had this sense of the word in his view.

But there is a third notion of the word virtue; according to which may be implied a steadiness of temper, and an inflexible courage in performing our duty. The knowledge of our duty in the common occurrences of life is not difficult to be attained, and in civilized and Christian countries is easy to be acquired. The conscience of a man tolerably well educated is a pretty sure guide and interpreter in points of morality, and more able to perform that office than many of the treatises of casuistical divinity. The deviations and offences of men seem usually to proceed not so much from error and ignorance as from the deceitfulness of sin, from the prevalence of temptations, and from want of courage and resolution; from a weakness of mind which dares not perform or undergo what reason recommends, and the understanding approves. Instances of this instability are numerous. I confine myself to a few taken from the scriptures. There is no office and occasion in life wherein courage and constancy are more requisite than in the administration of justice, when men are tempted by hopes or fears, by worldly connexions and considerations,

ations, either to acquit the guilty, or to condemn the innocent. Pilate knew the innocence of Christ—he could not stifle and dissemble his knowledge of it. Before he proceeds to pass sentence upon him, he delays, he argues, he expostulates, he tries every expedient to quiet the turbulent Jews, and to bring them over to his opinion and to his inclination. Accustomed as he is to rapine and to bloodshed, he looks upon this crime with fear and horror. And yet at last he condemns Christ. Whence comes this? From want of courage. For though it required a sort of courage, or of hardened resolution, to act against the reproofs of conscience, in condemning so innocent and so eminent a person, yet it required a still greater courage and constancy to resist an enraged multitude, and to run the risque of incurring the jealousy and the resentment of Cæsar, for favouring a man who was accused of being Cæsar's rival and enemy. This indeed is a shocking and an uncommon instance of iniquity. Let us take another example which approaches nearer to the ordinary weaknesses of wicked persons. There is a stubborn obstinacy in violating duties which are plain and fully enforced, and in

defying

defying the fatal consequences of such iniquity. Felix could not hear St. Paul discoursing upon righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, without being alarmed and terrified. Yet history represents him as one of no principles, debauched in his life, and an oppressor of the nation over which he was governour. However, the strength of reason in St. Paul's discourses, and the character of the speaker, almost subdued his bad dispositions for the time; and the apprehension of a future account gave an additional force to the exhortation. But it required still more courage to quit the bondage of sin, and to become a convert to virtue and religion. Here Felix acts the part of a coward, who could not look truth in the face, and puts off to another time the honest resolutions which began to seize on his corrupted heart. The young man in the gospel, who consulted Christ what he should do to obtain eternal life, had good qualities and good designs. But when he was advised to quit his large possessions, his heart failed him, and he could not come off victorious in the trial. An image of man, who often shews constancy and resolution, whilst he is not attacked on his weak side; but when the favourite object is to be

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quitted, or the favourite passion is to be subdued, finds himself unequal to the hard task.

If you thus consider virtue as meaning more particularly courage and constancy, you will find that sins are usually attended with a defect of this quality. Injustice is a weakness which induces us to wrong others because we cannot resist some vile passion: intemperance is a weakness by which reason submits to sensual appetite; covetousness is a weakness which prefers sordid lucre to spiritual gain; pride is a weakness which disposes us to think too well of ourselves, and too meanly even of those who are our superiors in every valuable acquisition. Add to your faith virtue, that is, steadiness and resolution in well-doing. And indeed faith is the proper foundation upon which such virtue can be built. Faith is that victory which thus overcometh the world. When we consider and compare together the moral virtues of Pagans and of Christians, and the motives of the Pagans from prudence, honour, reputation, and right reason, with the Christian motives from the love and fear of God, and the promise of immortal happiness, it must seem surprising that so much virtue should have been found in several Pagans, and so little in

several Christians. For this reason the latter seem to have been often too partial and too presumptuous in despising and depreciating the moral actions of the former. Instead of criticising them as false and falacious we may find matter enough for humiliation and shame on our side. It is true, the morality of the Pagans was not always produced by the best of motives, nor directed to the best of ends, to the honour of God; and so far it was imperfect. But let us judge of the Pagans not so much as they stood related to their Maker, but as they may be compared with Christians. Let us hold the balance fairly. They were influenced by the love of praise and reputation, by worldly prudence, and by self-interest. Be it so; but if the motives were not the most commendable, yet the men themselves with these inducements were often just, temperate, merciful, and benevolent. And we, we who know the will of God, and enjoy a revealed religion, and have future rewards and corrections set before us to excite our hopes and fears, we often behave ourselves worse than they did. How much more justly might they censure and deride us for acting so absurdly and inconsistently!

But the Christian who adds to his faith virtue, and is true to his own principles, is the man who built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.

St. Peter proceeds in his exhortation, and says, Add to your virtue knowledge.

The word knowledge conveys to us the notion of something that is purely speculative, and therefore seems to come in here unexpectedly, since the rest of the exhortation turns entirely upon moral qualities. But the apostle very justly mixes theory with practice.

A knowledge of religion is necessary, and without it neither can faith nor virtue be complete; and the more accurate that knowledge is, the more secure is the possessor of it from being misled either in matters of opinion or in matters of conduct, in his notions or in his actions. Ignorance sometimes is stubborn, and sometimes unstable. When it is presumptuous and self-willed, it refuses instruction; and, when it is diffident and submissive, it surrenders itself too implicitly to human authority.

But

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But an understanding duly cultivated and constantly exercised in the things pertaining to religion, enables a man to act steadily and consistently ; to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.

There have ever been false brethren and false teachers, who pretended to great skill and wisdom, and illumination, and imposed upon the weak and unsettled. Even in the first age of Christianity, and according to the predictions of our Saviour and of his apostles, such deceivers arose, who, boasting of new revelations, and of a profound skill in mysteries, drew away the unstable and the ignorant from the simplicity and the truth of the gospel. Religious knowledge was requisite to encounter such impostors, to see through their devices, and to confute their pretensions.

But by the word knowledge, may we not also understand something practical? Certainly we may ; for in morality there is a practical knowledge or the art of making a right use of good abilities and good dispositions. And this art may be called Christian prudence. Prudence in a Christian resembles that sort of accomplishment which we call capacity, parts and genius in a man of learning, and which

consists in a dextrous application of knowledge, and in turning it to the best advantage. So in matters of religion, though virtue belongs to all times and places, yet for particular virtues there are particular seasons and occasions more exactly suitable. No circumstances can make virtue improper, or vice allowable; but there are certain circumstances when certain virtues can be exerted to the best advantage. Virtue, in general, is a good habit, always permanent, and fixed in the heart; but the discreet exercise of it requires discernment and application; and Christian knowledge consists in this discernment.

Thus, a resolution to suffer all things rather than forsake Christ, is a temper which ought to be found in every Christian; but it is a matter of skill and importance to know the times and seasons, for exerting this courage; and a Christian who ought to sacrifice even his life for his Lord, yet should not throw himself into danger through vanity, and presumption, or in defence of errors, or of useless speculations. Therefore the primitive church made a wide distinction between the holy martyrs, who were sought out and seized by the pagans, and those hot zealots who presented them-

themselves of their own accord to their persecutors, and insulted them and their religion.

Thus that part of charity which is called almsgiving is a general duty; but prudence and discernment is necessary to direct us in the act of relieving the wants of others, according to our circumstances, and to their necessities and deserts.

Thus the managing our time, the regulating our discourse, the pursuit of our studies, the relaxation and exercise which are necessary to preserve the health of body and mind, all require discretion and judgment.

Thus, lastly, though all virtues are needful, there is amongst them a subordination, and some are more important than others. The love of God stands before the love of man, and his service must be preferred to all other considerations. Justice stands before charity, or rather is an essential part of it; and therefore a man ought to pay his debts before he relieves the poor, and have a right to his possessions before he distributes them. Add to virtue knowledge, or discernment and discretion.

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III. Let

III. Let us now proceed to the following virtues—add to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience.

As he who is not master of himself is not likely to be a good servant to God, and a good friend to man, St. Peter sets before us in the first place the duties relating to ourselves, namely, temperance, and patience. By intemperance men dishonour and debase themselves; by impatience they trouble and torment themselves. Temperance and patience should be inseparable; for good and evil are so blended in this present state, that we are perpetually obliged to exercise them both. Prosperity and adversity are the two usual trials to which we are exposed. The ancients saw and knew this; and one of their wise men hath said that morality consists principally in two things—in bearing and in forbearing; that is, in patience and in temperance.

Temperance doth not barely consist in abstaining from surfeiting and drunkenness. Lesser motives than those of Christianity might suffice to produce this small accomplishment. A mere regard to health might produce it. Christian temperance is a virtue which comprehends in it chastity, and which directs and moderates

moderates us in the use of every temporal blessing, and even of those pleasures which are natural and innocent. A sober life is always commendable, from what principle soever it proceed; it sets a good example, and it is to be hoped that God will sanctify it. But a moderate use of things temporal should arise, not from the pride of a stoic, nor from the prudence of an epicurean, but from the prospect of the favour and of the blessing of God.

Patience also is a virtue of all times and stations, and hath as many objects as there are inconveniences and evils in human life. Such are the injuries which we receive, or think that we receive from others; such is a low and mean condition, and a calamitous state. Contempt, misery, poverty, sickness, pain, disgrace, oppression, furnish occasion for the exercise of this virtue; as also that wise and yet strange dispensation of providence, which suffers virtue, and knowledge, and learning, and bright abilities, to be slighted and depressed, and vice and ignorance to be cherished and promoted. So likewise the weaknesses and errors of our neighbours are occasions for the trial of patience. A contempt and hatred of man-

mankind, on account of their faults and follies, is an unsociable and malicious temper. This moroseness and spleen, though it puts on the appearance of virtue, hath its source in mere pride and ill-nature. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of patience under the evils of life, and of long suffering with the defects of others.

Let us pass on to the next principle which is to animate every virtue, namely, piety. Add to patience godliness, or the love and the fear of God. This is the character which distinguisheth the Christian from the pagan moralist. I said it before ; We may find amongst the Pagans examples of justice, equity, sobriety, patience, liberality. But piety is peculiarly the effect of revealed religion. If there were no God or no providence, still without virtue, civil society could not well subsist. But if there be a God, it a shame not to direct our actions to his honour and glory.

Since therefore virtue or moral goodness is a quality which the world, bad as it is, expects from you, chuse you whether you will be good for the sake of pleasing your heavenly Father, or for the sake of pleasing a world, to which perhaps you have no great obligations.

To

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To conclude; Add to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.

Brotherly kindness, in the text, is the duty which one Christian owes to another: charity is more extensive, and is the duty which a man owes to mankind. This excellent grace distinguisheth Christianity from all other institutions, and from the Jewish religion, which, as the Jews interpreted it, was a narrow, contracted, unfociable religion, scarcely extended beyond its own nation. But our Saviour taught them better things in his parable of the good Samaritan; and hath given us, both in that and in many other discourses, sufficient instruction concerning our duty to our neighbour. May God give us grace to obey his precepts and to imitate his example!

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S E R M O N X.

LUKE ii. 29.

*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
according to thy word.*

THIS discourse shall consist of remarks upon the prophecy of Simeon, and the several parts of it; from which it will appear that he knew more concerning Christ than any of Christ's own disciples knew, till the Holy Ghost descended also upon them. For till that illumination they were no prophets, and saw but little into the nature of Christ's offices and kingdom.

The gift of prophecy, which had ceased amongst the Jews for four hundred years, began to revive at the birth of Christ, and was bestowed upon the Virgin Mary, and Elizabeth, and Zacharias, and Simeon, and Anna the daughter of Phanuel.

Joseph

Joseph and Mary brought the child Jesus to the temple, to pay the price of his redemption as of a first-born; and they offered the sacrifice appointed by the law for the poor, namely two doves, for they could not afford to bring a lamb, which was required of those who were in better circumstances.

And behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and the same was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law; then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

Salvation here means a Saviour; I have seen him whom thou hast sent, the Redeemer who is to be the author of salvation.

This salvation is to be understood in the spiritual sense, as a deliverance from the burden of the law, and the impositions of false teachers

teachers, from ignorance and error, from sin and Satan, from death and the grave. And so Zacharias in his prophecy had said that his child John the Baptist, as the forerunner of the Messias, should teach the people how to obtain remission of sins; and that Christ should enlighten those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and guide their feet in the way of peace; not of worldly peace, but of peace with God and with themselves.

I have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people. I have seen him whom thou hast sent to be the Saviour of all mankind, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Simeon mentions the Gentiles before the Jews, perhaps because Christ was to be more eminently the Saviour of the Gentiles than of the Jews. For though he was to give the preference to the Jews, and to seek and save in the first place the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and to instruct those who were more eminently styled, *thy people*, or the people of God; and though, by the ministry of Christ and of his apostles, many of the Jews were both called and chosen, yet the number of the Jews who rejected the gospel was far greater; whilst the
number

number of the believing Gentiles was beyond all comparison above that of the whole Jewish nation.

Then Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary. As being a prophet, and full of the Holy Ghost, he took upon himself that sacerdotal and prophetic office to pray for them, and to give them his blessing, acting in this respect as their superior; for as the scripture says, The lesser is blessed by the greater. And accordingly, when he took up the child Jesus in his arms, he did not bless him, by whom he himself was to be blessed, and whom he knew to be his Saviour and his Lord, though concealed under the weakness of infancy.

Then he addressed his discourse to the Virgin, and not to Joseph, to the mother and not to the father, though it was rather contrary to common rules. He speaks to her as to one more nearly related to the child, and concerned about him; for Christ was only legally, and by way of adoption, the son of Joseph, but in reality the son of Mary, and the son of God. To her he addresses himself, and informs her, in prophetic style, what should befall both her child and herself.

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He said to Mary, Behold this child of thine is set for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed: yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.

Here Simeon foretells the ill usage which Christ should receive, and the sufferings which he should endure, in his own person, and in that of his friends and followers. He was set for a sign that should be spoken against, he should be exposed to contradiction and reproach, to censure and calumny, to malice and cruelty. For though the design for which he came into the world was that the world by him might be saved, and though he did actually save multitudes and cause them to rise, yet was he the innocent occasion that many should fall, should be scandalized at his person and doctrine, and prefer darkness to light, and sin to righteousness, unbelief to faith, and obstinacy to repentance. To persons who were worldly-minded, and had no relish for spiritual things, which was the case of the generality of the Jews, who were puffed up with a fond conceit of their own wisdom and singular piety, full of vain glory, greedy of dominion and of applause, and affected with worldly pomp and

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grandeur, as were the Scribes and Pharisees and rulers of the people, he was to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, because these prejudices obstructed their reception of his pure and holy doctrine, and of his spiritual kingdom, so different from that which they had expected; and thus the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed: it would manifestly appear who had honest and religious dispositions and would receive the gospel with sincerity and gratitude, and who, through the hardness of their hearts and their corrupt affections, would reject the offers of salvation.

Simeon gives an intimation to the Virgin that she also must have a share in the afflictions of her Son. A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also. It is a groundless conceit of some ancient and some modern writers that she suffered martyrdom, and was slain with the sword, for which there is no evidence at all, except this prophecy, which may very well bear another sense, and be understood of excessive grief, which pierces like a sword. This grief, without question, she endured on many occasions, but especially when she stood close by the cross and beheld her dying Son. All the wounds which he then received in his body

she received in her soul. It was impossible for natural affection not to excite the deepest sorrow on such a severe occasion. But her trouble, great as it was, could not be accompanied with despair, since she knew enough to convince her that, notwithstanding all his sufferings, he should in God's appointed time be exalted to glory and dominion, and to an everlasting kingdom.

And now I proceed to examine the words of my text, which are the introduction to Simeon's prophecy: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.

It is to be considered whether these words are a simple acquiescence in the will of God, who had signified to him that the time of his departure was approaching, or whether they be a wish that he forms and a request that he addresses to God to give him his dismissal.

Certainly we may suppose that both these sentiments concur, and we can hardly doubt of it when we consider the disposition and circumstances of this aged and venerable man. As to acquiescence, he willingly submits to the order of Providence which called him hence after he had fulfilled his appointed time: for the Holy Ghost had expressly revealed to him that

he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ, or the Meffias. When therefore he beheld this infant Saviour manifested in the flesh, he judged that the hour of his own departure was at hand. He looks upon the birth of the Redeemer as the signal of his death, the rising of that sun as the setting of his day. He acknowledges that his appointed time is come, and without reluctance, perplexity, or anxiety, he submits to the decrees of heaven.

But it must be confessed that his words contain somewhat more than a simple resignation; they are extended even to a wish, and he is not only contented to receive death, but advances to meet it. For since he was not to die till he had seen the Lord's Christ, he might have kept himself at home till Christ should come to him, and by that method he might have hoped to prolong his days. But, far from it, he goes to the temple to seek him; and, when the child was brought in there, he comes up to him, he takes him in his arms, and cries out, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. He had now beheld what he had so long wished, the day of the consolation of

of Israel; and the world could offer nothing worthy to detain him any longer.

But here it may be objected, Is it then a reasonable disposition of mind to wish for death? Is it not sufficient to wait for it with patience, and to receive it with tranquillity and constancy? Is it not a common saying, that a wise man will neither desire it nor fear it? If the latter be an act of a low and abject spirit, is not the former an act of blind and precipitate rashness? Is not Simeon overhasty in his request, and doth he not want both the prudence of an aged man, and the resignation of a pious man? And should he not rather refer it entirely to the divine Providence to dispose of him either for life or death?

But let us not pass a rash judgment upon the behaviour and sentiments of this religious Israelite, who was just and devout, and who also, when he uttered these words, was full of the Holy Ghost, as St. Luke observes. True it is that it is unlawful to wish for a dissolution from the mere motives of flesh and blood, because we are in bad circumstances, or disappointed in our views, or bowed down with infirmities, or labouring under incurable distempers, or oppressed with poverty, or assaulted by

by enemies, or neglected by friends, or guilty of folly and misconduct, or, in a word, because we are miserable and weary of the world and of life. It is an unjustifiable temper that makes us seek for death from such selfish considerations. It is our duty to bear with humility and resignation the temporal evils which God permits to fall upon us, and to submit with respect to the orders of Providence, however harsh and disagreeable to the senses, and to remain in our station all the days of our appointed time, till our change cometh. But impatiently to strive to quit it, is at least to censure in our hearts the wisdom, the justice, and the goodness of our Maker.

And yet there is a desire of death which is very lawful, when after a life spent in the service of God, it ariseth from a desire to serve him in a better manner and in a better world, and to enjoy that peace and happiness which he has promised to those who love and fear him. Thus St. Paul more than once expresses his earnest desires to depart hence and to be with the Lord, which, says he, is far better. And nothing reconciled him to a longer stay but his apostolical office, and a view of being useful to the

the church and to those Christians who wanted his instructions and his assistance.

And indeed if the children of this world so earnestly seek its pleasures, its honours, and its riches, that they will run through all dangers, and endure all hardships, to obtain them, how much more should Christians desire those unfading rewards, and those true riches and honours which will be the portion of the righteous? Who would not willingly accept a natural, or even a violent dissolution, if he was secure to obtain such blessings?

It was this that made death a desirable object to Simeon. It was not a sense of the miseries of life that induced him to it. Doubtless he had wisdom and piety enough to bear them with constancy; and there is no reason to suppose that his condition was so calamitous as to make him weary of life, or that the infirmities of old age were a burden too heavy for him to bear. Experience may inform us that old persons love not life less than others, or are less afraid to die. What made Simeon wish to quit the world, was the hope and the prospect of a better world. And few there are who resemble him in this respect. The rewards of heaven have a fainter influence on the minds of

most Christians. Far from aspiring after them, they had rather defer them to a remoter time; and death, which opens the gate to God's kingdom, is not the more welcome on that account; and when it approaches, they want all the consolations that all their friends can give them to make them submit to it with decency. And yet this seems to be as unreasonable as if a person tossed in a tempest should be afflicted at entering into an harbour, or a captive to find himself delivered out of prison and restored to liberty. Simeon, enjoying the testimony of a good conscience, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and considering the advantageous exchange of quitting earth for heaven, says, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; in which each word expresses his faith and his piety.

He says, Now let me depart: he desires no delay. Many would rather say with the Psalmist, O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength before I go hence, and be no more seen. Grant me leisure to settle my affairs, to provide for my family, to examine my conscience, and to put myself in a condition to appear before thee. But Simeon was not like others, who usually want to put off that evil day,

day. If they could have their choice, there would be no period of life in which they would not have some plea to defer the payment of this debt to nature, and say to death as the evil spirits said to Christ, Why art thou come to torment us before the time? How many of those pleas can the hopes and fears of vain men invent and set forth to the best advantage? Some would remonstrate that they are young, and that it is a sad thing to be taken off in the flower of their age; others that they have children, and could wish to see them settled, and in a fair way of prospering; others that they are engaged in undertakings useful to themselves and their families; others that they hope to do considerable service to religion or to civil society, to the church or to the state. Simeon is moved by none of these considerations—he desires not a respite and a reprieve to a distant day, not even to the morrow. Now, says he, let thy servant receive his dismissal.

Such a disposition as this is very uncommon; it is not to be expected; it is not to be required. But in some degree we should endeavour to acquire it, so far at least as not to wish for impossibilities, not to repine and complain, but
I humbly

humbly to submit to the will of God. If we are old we should not regret to quit a decayed body, as a house that is gone to ruin, and not capable of being repaired, and to part with a world which is usually very willing to part with us. If we are young, by going hence, we have the fewer evils to suffer, the fewer dangers to encounter, the fewer disappointments to undergo, and the fewer offences to commit. If we leave a family not so well provided for as we could wish, if they be good, we may commit them into the hands of Him who is the Father of the fatherless, and the protector of the poor. If the interests of religion seem to require our assistance, God will take care in every age to raise up useful servants to fulfil the designs of his providence.

One thing indeed there is which may well incline us to live longer, and that is, that we may have time to make our peace with our conscience, and with God. But this was not the case of Simeon, of whom it is said that he was just and devout. He had long waited for the consolation of Israel, by the coming of the Messias, of which blessing he was to partake. This had been his desire and his expectation; and, seeing this accomplished, he had nothing
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to do but to depart in peace. Thus should we prepare ourselves, like him, if like him we would depart in peace. It is the utmost folly to defer that preparation to the last hour. The business is too important, and too intricate to be dispatched in so short a time, when so many things may concur to deprive us of all our faculties.

The expression which Simeon uses is remarkable; Let me depart. The word properly signifies *to unloose*, and expresses the deliverance of a prisoner, whose chains are taken off. An elegant figure of speech, which implies that we are here in reality in a state of confinement and captivity. This mortal body is a prison in which the soul is shut up, and dwells in darkness or in a twilight. And besides the bond of the flesh, there are other bonds which hold it—as the bonds of irregular affections, of pains and diseases, of want and poverty, of toil and labour, of sorrow and affliction. Death releases the servants of God from all these bonds, and transfers them from a state of imperfect obedience to a state of righteousness, from disease to health, from poverty to abundance, and from labour to everlasting rest. This should reconcile Christians to a dissolution,

^a ἀπώλυσ.

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which cannot long be avoided, whether they be reconciled to it or no.

But this expression implies that we are not masters of our own life, and cannot give it up when we think fit; that it is the hand of God that must unloose these bonds, and that we must not go hence till he lets us depart. It is an unnatural, a criminal, a monstrous attempt, to lay hands on ourselves. An horrible folly it was in many of the Romans to dignify this frantic behaviour with the name of heroic virtue. Heroic virtue is rather shewed in submitting to the temporal evils which Providence lays upon us. The maxim of St. Paul is indubitable—None of us liveth to himself, and no one dieth to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord. No person, except Jesus Christ, could truly say, I have no power to lay down my life, because none could say with him, I have power to take it up again.

We have had persons in our days who have written in behalf of self-murder. They have recommended it to others, but have not thought fit to practise it upon themselves, which indeed would have been rather better than writing for it, because it would have delivered civil society from

from such unworthy members, from men worse than pagans; for those wiser pagans who condemned such doctrines, bear witness against them now, and will bear witness against them in the last day.

He who gave us our life expects that we should take care of it, and preserve it by industry and temperance, and that when it is required back, we should say, with Simeon, Lord, now let thy servant depart, and depart in peace.

To depart in peace is a scriptural expression, and a blessing which God bestowed upon Abraham, upon Josias, and upon other eminent and religious persons.

Peace may signify two things, external and internal peace. External is the prosperity of our affairs, the settlement of our family, and the happiness of the times. Internal peace is the tranquillity of the soul, and the humble hope of being in God's favour. To depart in peace may have respect to both these things.

As to the former of these, Simeon truly departed in peace; for never from the creation was a more glorious event than the birth of the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind.

Well

Well might he be contented to close his eyes, after having seen this salvation of God.

But external peace is nothing without the internal, and no prosperity can calm a troubled conscience. To depart in peace is to possess, not a philosophical, but a Christian serenity of mind.

This serenity is the result of various sentiments concurring to produce and preserve it. The first is a moderate indifference for the world and the things of the world. They whose affections are enslaved to it, by losing it, lose all that they value and covet. The Christian has hopes of making an advantageous exchange in every respect.

The second support of the mind is faith in Christ as in a Redeemer; for whose sake and by whose mediation the forgiveness of sins is obtained.

The third support is hope founded on this faith. A true servant of Christ is not like that unhappy pagan emperor, who seeing his end approaching, said to his soul, Where wilt thou go, naked, trembling, and disconsolate? A Christian hopes to go to his Father, and to his Lord.

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The last foundation of peace of mind is the testimony of conscience, a sense not of perfect innocence, and of the merit of works, which would be vanity, arrogance, and a folly which indeed seems by no means to be common amongst Christians in their last hours; but a sense of having lived before God in sincerity and without hypocrisy, without wilful, deliberate, presumptuous, and continual disobedience.

This doubtless contributed to the peace of Simeon, who had been infected neither with the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, nor with the impiety of the Sadducees, who had been free from superstition and profaneness, who had just hope of being numbered amongst the servants of God, of God who would not have honoured him with the spirit of prophecy, and have comforted him with the sight of the Messiah, unless he had been in his favour. These privileges were to him an earnest of a better life in a better world, and must have produced in him, not only submission and acquiescence, but exultation and joy.

This joy was not founded upon the prospect of mere temporal blessings to his family, his friends

friends, and his country, but upon sublimer spiritual views of that salvation, of which and all other well-disposed persons were to take. He saw the Divine Child, whom ancient oracles had foretold, whom the ceremonies of the law had prefigured, whom princes and prophets, and righteous persons desired to see, and saw him not, in whom many miracles and so many blessings were ed; of which blessings we also shall partake, we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

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SERMON XI.

JEREMIAH xvii. 9.

The heart is deceitful above all things; and desperately wicked: who can know it?

THESE words were spoken by Jeremiah concerning his own countrymen, not all of them, I suppose, but the more corrupted part of the nation, who to their other vices had added a consummate hypocrisy, and of the hearts of these men he draws a most hideous picture; and describes them under three bad characters: the first is fraud and treachery—the heart is deceitful above all things. The second is excessive malice. It is desperately wicked—the third is deep dissimulation and hypocrisy, expressed in the way of question. Who can know it? A worse representation than this

can hardly be made of any creature; and therefore it must not be supposed that this was intended to be a description of human nature, or of the heart of man in general, but rather of the most habitual and depraved sort of sinners. If then we would apply the words of the text to mankind, we must take them in a much lower sense, and then we may say truly enough, that there is, usually speaking, in the human heart, either more or less, a mixture of deceitfulness, and of perverse inclinations, which are often so concealed as to be hardly discerned by other persons, or by the heart itself which harbours them; and therefore much care and industry are requisite on our part to make a right use of God's assistances, and to rectify this deep disorder. After this manner we will consider the words of the prophet.

First, The heart is deceitful. The heart is the style of the scriptures, which is adopted into our common language, denotes the inner man, his thoughts, his will, his inclinations, and his affections; or the human soul with its faculties and operations. This heart then is deceitful, treacherous, and hard to be known. It is deceitful with relation to God; for we often promise him what we do not perform,

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and endeavour to put him off with external homage, and with a partial obedience. It is deceitful with respect to other men; we industriously conceal from them what passeth within us, and is not fit to shew itself openly, and we study to cheat them with false appearances. It is deceitful with regard to ourselves; and our passions often delude us, pervert our judgment, and impose upon our reason. In this latter respect we will more particularly consider the frequent deceitfulness of the heart.

I say then that inconstancy is a defect which seems almost natural to us, and scarcely avoidable. We all know this experimentally. Our opinions and our judgments are subject to fickle variations. The same object pleases to-day, and displeases to-morrow, and we pass from love to aversion, and from aversion to love. As to the things truly valuable and important, scarcely can the mind continue fixed upon them, even for a moderate portion of time. It says that God is amiable above all, and that it will love him above all; but then come other objects and present themselves—objects more proportionable to the senses; and then the mind quits its former resolutions, and runs after inferior things. It resolves to recollect itself, to medi-

tate, and to pray; but presently a multitude of avocations interpose; and lead it off from the serious subject. It is volatile, and it hates confinement. It wants something new for its entertainment. It forms good resolutions, and it mightily pleased with them for a time; and then coldness, and indifference, and disgust ensue.

Whence comes this mutability? Many causes may be assigned for it. We are changeable by that connection which the soul hath with the body, and with the state of the body which is subject to perpetual alterations. The different motion of the blood, and of the spirits, the change in any part of the body, the very difference of the air that we breathe, and of the food that we eat, is capable of altering the train and drift of our thoughts. Health or sickness, strength or weakness, will make us judge, think, chuse, and act differently even about morality and religion: and we have little or no power to hinder these sudden alterations in the constitution of the body.

Secondly, we are inconstant on account of the connection that we have with external objects by our senses. Every thing that presents itself before us makes an impression upon the mind.

mind. The manners, the opinions, and the passions, of those with whom we often converse, have no small influence upon us. They work upon our imagination, and produce the like dispositions in us which we behold in them. Thus as knowledge, discernment, sound judgment, accurate reasoning, are communicated to us by others; so bigotry, and superstition, and fanaticism, and enthusiasm, together with its effects upon the blood, the nerves, and the brain, are transfused from one person into another, and are as catching and infectious as any bodily distemper.

Lastly, another cause of inconstancy is from the soul itself in its present situation; it loves novelty, and it loves variety.

From this inconstancy of the heart proceeds the deceitfulness of it with relation to its honest engagements, and to its good resolutions. Liberal in promises, and stingy in performances, ready to vow, and slow to pay. It says, like the son in the parable to the father, I go, Sir, and it goes not. In the day of affliction it proposeth to amend every thing that is amiss, and to practise every thing that is decent and commendable; in the day of prosperity it forgets it all. And what is this, but the falseness and

perfidiousness of the human heart, faithless to its God, faithless to its neighbour, and faithless to its own self? for when a man resolves to do well, and doeth it not, this is not always mere hypocrisy, and a formed design to impose upon men, and much less to impose upon God. Very good persons have experienced some of this deceitfulness of their own hearts, as it appears from their faults and their relapses. St. Peter said with much earnestness to his Master, Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. He spake as he thought, and as he intended at that time; but his heart was more inconstant and irresolute than he imagined, and deluded him in the fatal hour of temptation.

Amongst other causes of this common fickleness, one is, that men take up good resolutions on a sudden, and without sufficient premeditation and precaution; and, when it comes to the trial, difficulties arise which were not foreseen. A complete change for the better, and a sincere obedience, require many acts which are irksome to a mind that loves ease and pleasure; and then follow weariness and disgust, want of courage, and want of perseverance.

Another cause of this levity and deceitfulness of the heart arises from self-love, a leading passion,

passion, which influences all the rest, and lies deep in the recesses of the human mind. Disposed to admire ourselves, we form a flattering representation of our inclinations, qualities, and abilities; we cherish our mistakes, dislike those who would undeceive us, and abhor those who undervalue us. And yet others, even though inclined to favour us, have not so good an opinion of us, as we have of ourselves. If they do justice to the advantageous part of our character, they discern our failings and imperfections. Whence comes this difference of judgement between us and them? It comes from this, that they have none of our partiality to mislead them, and take measure of us by our actions: whilst we, who yet ought to be better acquainted with our own hearts, are under the illusions of self-love.

The ways of a man, says Solomon, are right in his own eyes. Who would think it possible that men should so often be contented with themselves, and imagine their ways to be right, when they are not so? Yet experience shews that this is no uncommon case, and men are ready to applaud their own behaviour, and to justify their own actions in the main. As to religion and religious duties, they often, upon

weak and deceitful grounds, speak peace and security to their own souls, instead of seeking it in the way that God hath prescribed. The Jews said, We have Abraham for our father; that was their merit. At another time, they said, We have the temple of the Lord; that was to be their protection. At another time, We are not like the heathen, we are not like the publicans; we are better than they; therefore we must needs be in the favour of God. And so amongst Christians, one fancies himself to be good and great, because he is promoted to high stations, and acquires a large share of temporal prosperity; this is, as he thinks, the just recompense of his singular merit, a merit which none can discern besides himself. Another hath his habitual vices, but pretends to have much honour, and to scorn to do a base thing; and this is to compensate for his transgressions. Another, sensible that he hath done amiss, hath his intervals when the passions subside, and reason and reflection take place; and then he thinks himself quite reformed. Another trusts to his zeal for religion, though it be often mere spleen and party-spirit. Another is exact in the externals of duty. It is endless to enumerate the various ways by which men impose

impose upon themselves in things relating to piety and morality.

This deceitfulness of the human heart imposeth upon the understanding, and produces false opinions and false judgments. We judge both of men and of things as we love, or as we hate; and we love or hate as we list. In the things which we love, we give a loose to our imagination, and clothe them with all sorts of accomplishments. In the things which we hate, we aggravate every defect, and extenuate every good quality.

II. The second proposition in the text is, that the heart of man is desperately wicked; and this, as I observed, is the character of the worst sort of sinners. But though it cannot be applicable to all persons, yet thus much is true, that they who do not keep their heart with all diligence will be prone to evil. Man is subject to a variety of passions and perturbations, from the frame of his body, and from his commerce with external objects. These passions exert themselves very early, and if they be not discreetly governed, will soon grow unruly; and when bad actions, by frequent repetition become bad habits, it is excessively hard to correct them,

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as every one's own experience or observation will fully inform him.

To be sensible how men in general are depraved, we need only consult history, and consider the common state of the world. These will give us a hideous representation of human disorders and iniquities, both public and private, national and personal. The desperate wickedness of many is such, that nothing but rigour, nothing but jails and gibbets, can keep civil society in tolerable order. Who can number up the sins which men are perpetually committing? and all these proceed from an evil heart, as our Saviour says. To give some check to this inundation of evil, the providence of God hath provided various remedies; as the voice of conscience, the advantages of education, the instructions of the wise, the assistance of human laws, the example of the good, the desire of reputation, the fear of infamy, the light of reason, the profitableness of virtue, the pernicious nature of vice, and, lastly, the revealed word of God. These produce good effects, particularly amongst Christians; and hence it is that if there are but few characters eminently good, there are not very many consummately,
totally,

totally, and uniformly bad. Yet notwithstanding these correctives, we see and feel how moral evil abounds, even where the gospel is professed.

Experience shews us that men are often guilty of a wilful ignorance in point of duty. An ignorance that is involuntary is excusable, but an affected and a chosen one is a proof of a bad heart. Such is the case of those who take pains to shun themselves, and to prefer darkness to light. The blindness of most of the Jews who rejected Christ was an artificial and wilful blindness; and so is that of several persons with relation to Christian faith and practice. They neither read nor hear the word of God, they love to live in a careless insensibility, they hate to be instructed or re-proved, and they sin even against that little knowledge which they cannot shut out, and those remains of conscience which they cannot shake off.

III. The heart of man is inscrutable. Who can know it? says the prophet. That is; No man can know it; or rather, It is no easy matter to know it. There is a geneal knowledge which we have of the human heart, and a way of judging concerning it, which in the main is tolerably

tolerably sure. The tree, says our Lord, is known by the fruits; and, in like manner, the heart is known by the actions. When a man's behaviour is vile, and his conversation profane, we may pronounce his heart to be bad; and we are not obliged to put out our own eyes, and renounce our own senses, and to call evil good, and good evil, rather than to censure such a person, or entertain a bad opinion of him. Yet in judging of others much caution and candour are requisite. There are dubious facts, uncertain reports, actions from which false inferences may be drawn. And this shews that the heart of man is not easy to be discerned. There is also in some persons such a mixture of good and evil that it is hard to know which predominates. Therefore are we admonished to beware of censoriousness. When a man's behaviour is regular, and his conversation sober and civil, there is reason to suppose that his heart is for the most part well disposed. To judge otherwise would be uncharitable.

But the discernment which each person should have of his own heart, is the most important. And here one would think that such skill is easily acquired, and doth in a manner obtrude itself upon us. We often say, I know
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such an one as I know myself. Who knoweth the things of a man, says St. Paul, but the spirit of a man that is in him? Here he seems to suppose that it is as easy for a person to know what passeth in his own heart, as it is difficult to know what passeth in the heart of another. And yet it is certain that in a religious sense it is often hard to know one's self. There are two sorts of self-knowledge, the one a knowledge of feeling and perceiving, the other a knowledge of reflection and discernment. As to the first, we all of us have it without question. Every one knows that he is thinking of this or that object, that he hath such or such inclinations, purposes, and resolutions as are formed in his mind. But this is a confused knowledge, or rather an impression, in receiving which we are passive. It cometh suddenly, and it passeth away swiftly, leaving little or no trace behind it, and soon forgotten as though it had never been. It informs us only of what we are thinking or doing, but not of the nature, causes, and effects of our thoughts and deeds. As to the second and true kind of self-knowledge, which is the result of consideration and examination, we have it seldom,

feldom, and we cannot acquire it without attention and care.

It is strange how little we know practically either of our body, or of our understanding, or our heart. As to the body, its defects are usually overlooked by us, unless they be very remarkable, or painful. As to our understanding, we flatter ourselves that we have a due share of it, and observe how deficient our neighbours are in that respect; how one is stupid and silly, another ignorant, a third prejudiced, injudicious, and conceited. Thus he who hath a wrong judgment and a heated imagination, decides upon every point with more confidence than persons of a far greater capacity. He who is rough, peevish, and intractable, knows nothing of it, whilst others can hardly tell how to bear with him. So true it is that we know not ourselves. A man owns himself guilty of this or that fault, but however he says that his heart is good and honest at the bottom. Weak illusion! since it is from the evil which lurks in the heart that these irregular actions proceed.

Thus we err by thinking too well of ourselves, and too hardly of others. Our mistakes are usually on this side; and yet it sometimes happens

happens that men think and judge too severely of themselves; and this is when they are overwhelmed with melancholy, and in a low and desponding way. Then they put the worst construction upon all that they have said and done. This ariseth from weakness of spirits, and is a bodily distemper. As to the understanding also, sometimes there are persons who think more contemptibly of their own capacity than they ought, and thence are deterred from attempting commendable things, in which they might have succeeded. This is owing sometimes to lowness of spirits, and sometimes to mere indolence and laziness.

The difficulty of knowing our hearts appears from those repeated commands in scripture to consider and search our ways. If the heart were open to itself, and easily accessible, we should not be thus reminded to watch it with all diligence. And indeed it is no small task to review our knowledge, our opinions, our judgments, and our belief; to recollect our past actions, and the use which we have made of God's blessings, and to compare our practice with our duty.

This difficulty also appears from the character which God gives to himself, that he alone
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is the searcher of hearts. In the text it is said, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? then follows, I the Lord search the heart, and the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

If this be the sole privilege of God, should we attempt to know ourselves? Should we not leave it, like other things, to him to whom it belongs? But to serve that God, when he calls himself searcher of hearts, means two things, that he alone knows the hearts of all creatures, and that he alone knows them without any mixture of error. We know but little of the hearts of other men, and therefore should be cautious in judging of them; and as to our own, though we shall never know it exactly, with all our endeavours, yet as far as we can, we are obliged to acquaint ourselves with it.

The education of men, their wants, their daily return, and must be relieved, their employments, their studies, their ambitions, their and prospects, their diversions, their acquaintances, their visits, their journies, all these things concur to make them live to the world.

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and to others, rather than to themselves, and banish self-examination, more or less. Add to this, that many use their utmost endeavour not to know themselves, nor to reflect upon their own follies, errors, and sins. They had rather be occupied in censuring and ridiculing the faults of others. If they are told of their misbehaviour, their pride is offended, and they take kind admonition for spleen and peevishness. If they are reminded that the word of God condemns this, and requires that, they account it a general direction, which little concerns them in particular. When persons have thus passed a long time without considering their own actions, it is with them as with merchants who have neglected to make up their accounts; many articles are forgotten or mistaken, and all is in perplexity and confusion. When this review of themselves is performed in a hurry and by halves, it is much the same thing, to any moral purposes, as if it were not done at all. When they have actually entered upon good resolutions and practices, still it is not easy to know how far the change is sincere and steady.

The inferences are these:

We should entertain a sober diffidence of ourselves. He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool, says Solomon. It becometh us to be humble, cautious, and vigilant, and to beg the divine assistance in all our undertakings.

We should not be much surprised or concerned when men use us ill, or disappoint us. We cannot rely upon ourselves, and much less upon others. Men are and will be deceitful: Let us not put our trust in them, but in Him who never faileth and forsaketh his servants.

We should take care to give good principles and a good example to those young persons whom divine or human laws have placed under our guidance and protection. This will check and counterbalance that natural levity and deceitfulness of heart, which else will grow upon them.

We should be ready to confess our offences to God, and be as strict in censuring our own defects as we often are in condemning those of others. A due sense of our faults is the first step towards amendment.

Since the heart of man is deep and close, we should betimes endeavour to get acquainted with our own. It is a knowledge which concerns us more than many of the things in

which

which we spend our labours and inquiries. Whilst other points are favourite objects of our curiosity and industry, we neglect this. To know God, and to know ourselves, this is the great end and duty of man. We are offended at those persons who are blind to their own faults, we are tired and vexed to find them conceited, overbearing, impertinent and vain, and expecting that every one should reverence and admire them. If these people knew themselves better, say we, their pride would be humbled. It is very true; and perhaps they think and say the same of us, and perhaps with the same reason.

But if it be hard to know ourselves, how can we acquire such skill in a tolerable degree? First by humility and consideration, by consulting the holy Scripture, that lamp of God which will give us light in searching into the recesses of the heart; and by imploring the divine assistance. We have probably experienced in some measure good and bad fortune, prosperity and adversity, and these are the two great trials of our temper. Afflictions are properly called temptations or trials, serving to discover the inward man. If in trouble we murmur against Providence, and are full of impatience,

and very angry at the second causes which are the instruments of our trouble, it is a bad sign: if we are humble and submissive, and more sorry for our sins than for our calamities, it is a sign that the grace of God works in us for good. Prosperity is also a trial. If ease and abundance makes us worldly-minded, proud, conceited, ambitious, dissipated, irreligious, the heart is in a bad condition: if it makes us grateful to God, charitable to men, sober, modest, and moderate, it is a favourable sign.

We should consider our conduct in the main, whether it be rational and uniform. To act the same good part in public and in private, in sickness and in health, in loss and in gain, this is one of the best characters in life; and consequently there are few who come quite up to it.

Some use may be made from considering the behaviour of others, good or bad, and endeavouring to imitate their virtues, and to shun their vices. It is no business of ours to be curious in making remarks upon others; but there are errors and faults which are glaring and visible to all the world, and from these we may receive instruction, and learn wisdom.

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Some use may also be made of the censures which others pass upon us. We may learn truth from an enemy, and much more from the admonitions of friends and well-wishers.

We should always bear it in mind, that we live under the inspection of Him, who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, to render to every one according to his works. In vain we fly from ourselves; for he will open our eyes and shew us our conduct and condition, sooner or later. Let us not remain in a voluntary ignorance till that formidable hour, but learn at present to examine and amend ourselves. Then the favourable opinion which others may perhaps entertain of us will not make us vain; and if we find in ourselves any thing that is commendable, we shall gratefully ascribe it to the assistance of the great Author of every good gift.

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S E R M O N XII.

JOHN V. 36.

The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

OUR Lord in these words declares, that the miracles wrought by him were a proof of his divine mission, and consequently that the Jews who rejected him were inexcusable: from which we may make this inference, that the nature and the use of miracles are easy to be apprehended.

A miracle is a sensible operation, contrary to the common course of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the assistance, or by the permission of God.

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Miracles

Miracles cannot directly prove the truth or falsehood, the reasonableness or absurdity of any doctrine. They are, properly speaking, appeals to our senses; and doctrines are appeals to our reason. Miracles then are to be considered as credentials and testimonials, which when a man can produce openly and fairly, if he teaches nothing absurd and contradictory to reason, and, much more, if his doctrines appear to be good and beneficial, he ought to be believed and obeyed.

That a precept is not absurd; this must be proved by reason: that such a precept comes from God; this must be proved by miracles.

The miracles recorded in the New Testament recommend themselves to our belief upon many accounts, which we will now take into consideration,

Miracles then were performed by our Saviour, because there was a necessity that he should perform them, and his religion could be established by no other means.

He was sent to the Jews, whose religion was delivered to them by Moses and the Prophets, and established by signs and wonders. He must have equalled these his predecessors, if he expected

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pected that any regard should be paid to him by the nation.

He declares himself to be a Messenger sent from God. But how should either Jews or Gentiles be convinced of this? Not merely by the reasonableness of his doctrines, nor by the innocence of his life. Other proofs are wanting. He must perform things which man cannot do by his own natural powers. God himself stands discovered to us by his works of creation and preservation; and by works beyond human abilities his Ministers and his Prophets must shew their authority.

The duties which Christ commands relate to the worship of the Deity, and to the practice of morality.

The Christian Religion says; There is one God; and one Mediator, Jesus Christ. As to the unity of God, the world, except the Jews, lay involved in error. They worshipped Gods many, and Lords many.

Yet the Gentiles, at least the wiser part of them, did not adore many almighty and co-equal Gods. They acknowledged one God and Father of all. But besides this one Supreme, they imagined many inferior gods, to whom the government of the world was committed,

mitted, and who were a sort of Ministers and Mediators between the God and Father of Gods and men and the inhabitants of the earth. To these they erected statues, temples, and altars, and these they honoured with various rites and ceremonies.

Our Saviour came to destroy this blind superstition, and to teach men, that there was one God and Father of all, and one Mediator and Son of God, and one holy and sanctifying Spirit; that there were also Angels executing the commands of God, but that they had no divine dominion given to them, and were no proper objects of religious worship.

Though reason hath nothing to object to these doctrines of revelation, yet they are not discoverable by unassisted reason; and therefore he who taught them was obliged to confirm them by miracles.

As to Christian morality, it is not only suitable to reason, when discovered; it is capable of being proved by reason alone. But then men were so dissolute, and corrupted, and ignorant, that to recommend morality effectually to them, to give them right notions of it, and to induce them to practise it, a divine Instructor was become necessary, who should enforce

it with authority, in the name of God, and with the power of God visibly manifested.

The most effectual way to produce a reformation of manners, was to persuade men of a future state of retribution. This also was a doctrine generally looked upon by the better sort of Gentiles as a probable thing, but not as an absolute certainty. The prospect beyond the grave was confused and gloomy; and the best and wisest man in the Pagan world, who died a Martyr to truth and honesty, speaking of it in his last hours, says; Whether there be another and a better life for the good, the Gods know; but no mortal, I think, can be certain of it. However that be, this is certain, that nothing very disastrous can befall a worthy man, living or dying; for to such a person death at the worst is only a state of silent and quiet insensibility; and there is reason to hope that it is a removal to an happier state. Such was his Creed.

Christ came to rectify these errors, and to dissipate these doubts, and to bring immortality to light. And how could he accomplish this? Only by performing miracles, and miracles particularly suited to such doctrines, namely,
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by raising the dead, and by rising himself from the grave.

The miracles by which Christianity is supported have all the Characters of truth that can reasonably be required.

They were wrought by persons who gave other proofs of their mission, and who rest not the whole of their cause upon miracles, but insist also upon the reasonableness of their doctrines, and offer them to examination. This is a fair and open proceeding.

Miracles, especially those of a charitable and beneficent nature, create a strong prejudice in favour of such a teacher in the minds of those who are relieved by him. The man born blind, who was cured by our Lord, declared boldly to the malicious Jews, that his benefactor was a Prophet sent from God; and it is no wonder that he thought so honourably of his Physician, and had a kind of implicit faith in him. Every honest man in his situation would have judged in the same manner.

But Christ and his Apostles insisted not on this advantage; they exhorted men to search the Scriptures, to examine and judge for themselves; and they appealed to the senses, to the understanding, and to the conscience of their hearers.

hearers, whether they did not shew sufficient proofs of their mission, and whether they did not propose doctrines and require duties to which no just objection could be made.

The Christian miracles were wrought by persons who appealed to God, and declared that they would perform them. By acting in the name of the God and Father of all, they gave the best kind of proof that they were supported by him, and thereby prevented objections that the wonder might happen by chance, or be effected by a secret fatal power of which they themselves knew nothing, or by evil spirits, or for other ends and purposes; and they laid themselves under a necessity of fulfilling their promises, or of passing for men who either deceived others, or were deceived themselves.

They were wrought by persons known to be poor, unlearned, of a low condition, and destitute of powerful friends and patrons.

They were performed in a public manner, which is a circumstance necessary to establish their credit; for though miracles may be wrought in secret, and cannot be disproved, only because they were seen by few, yet they often afford motives for suspicion, and a wise inquirer would be inclined perhaps to suspend his

his assent in such cases, and to pass no judgment about them.

The Writers of the New Testament, when they relate the miracles, often name the time, the place, the occasion, the circumstances, the diseases that were removed, the persons healed or raised, the persons who were present, and the things that were said or done by friends and foes on the occasion; giving men an opportunity to inquire into the facts, and to disprove them if they were able. Nothing was more easy than for Jews, Greeks, and Romans to inquire into the miracles wrought by St. Paul in the most public manner, in cities, before Roman magistrates, and in the sight of the multitude, which were related by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, in a book which was published soon after these transactions.

It appears also from one of the most ancient writers after the days of the Apostles, that there were persons living even in his times, upon whom Christ had wrought miracles; and it is probable, that some of those who were cured of their infirmities, or raised from the dead by our Saviour, were preserved by Providence to an extreme old age, to be living witnesses of his power and goodness.

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They were performed before enemies, or unbelievers, or doubters, and persons not yet convinced; as indeed it was highly fit that they should; for miracles, in the main, are not so much designed for those who believe as for those who believe not, and who are as yet undetermined, and want proper motives of persuasion.

They were wrought in a learned age and civilized countries, and in the politest and best inhabited parts of the world, where persons are not easily deluded, and are rather disposed to hesitate upon strange and unexpected appearances, and to examine strictly, than to be ductile and over-credulous.

They were accompanied with no marks of pride, vanity, and ostentation. The behaviour of the Apostles, in this respect, was unexceptionable; for they ascribed all their power to their Master; and our Saviour, during his ministry, acted as a servant, and a prophet sent from God, ascribing all his miracles to his Father.

They were wrought for no worldly advantage. As nothing of that kind was sought, so nothing was obtained by our Lord and by his Disciples. Obscure indeed they could not be
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who were endued with such powers, and despised they could not be by their friends and followers; but these were small temporal advantages set against the obloquy, the opposition, the injuries, the afflictions, and the sufferings which they underwent: To do good, and to receive evil, was their portion; and poverty was their lot and their choice.

What added to the dignity of these miracles was the express command of Christ to his Apostles, that they should take no gratuity or reward for doing them: Freely ye have received; freely give.

They were wrought in confirmation of doctrines good and useful to mankind. The excellence of Christian Morality will not be contested by fair and candid examiners.

They were performed at a time when men wanted neither power nor inclination to expose them, if they were impostures, and were in no danger of being treated as Atheists and Heretics, of being insulted by the populace, and persecuted by the Civil Magistrate, for deriding them.

They were various and numerous, and of a permanent nature, and might be reviewed and re-examined. When our Saviour was risen

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from the dead, it could not be said of him that he appeared only like a phantom for a moment. He shewed himself alive to his Apostles by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days.

They had nothing fantastical or cruel, but were acts of kindness and beneficence, calculated to excite gratitude more than fear, and to persuade rather than to terrify. Christ performed no miracles of the severe kind, and the Apostles very few, and no more than were evidently necessary for wise and good purposes.

They prevailed upon many persons to quit the religion in which they had been educated, and with it ease and pleasure and worldly conveniencies, to give up ample fortunes, to disoblige their dearest friends and relations, to offend rulers and magistrates, to leave their native land, and to suffer all kinds of temporal evils, and the loss of life.

They were attested by proper witnesses. The Disciples of Christ saw the miracles of their Master, and died in confirmation of them, particularly of his resurrection. St. Paul appeals to the Church of the Corinthians, that he had wrought miracles amongst them, and that they

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had miraculous gifts conferred upon them by the holy Spirit.

They were foretold by the Prophets, and such as the Jews expected, and had reason to expect, from the Messias. Isaias speaks of times when miracles should be performed, and of a person who should open the eyes of the blind, and caused the lame to walk and heal the diseased; which when Christ performed, he might justly affirm that he was the Person promised by the Prophet.

They were acknowledged by adversaries. Besides the confessions of that kind recorded in the Gospel, and the conversions of enemies, the Jewish objection that they were wrought by evil spirits, and the Gentile objection that they were effected by arts of Magic, amounted to a confession that there was in them something preternatural.

The same persons whose miracles stand recorded in the Gospel foretold also many events, some of which did not come to pass till a considerable time after the Books of the New Testament were written, and the Writers were dead. This confirms the miracles related in these books. We have predictions there of the dispersion of the Jews, of their continuance as
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a distinct people, of the calling of the Gentiles, of the perpetual duration of Christ's kingdom, of the fall of the persecuting Emperors, of the particular corruptions which should find admission into the Church, and of the spiritual tyranny which should be erected in it.

Our Saviour empowered his Apostles to work miracles in his name, and communicated this gift to them; and afterwards the Apostles by baptizing converts, and by imposition of hands gave them the like powers. This is a proof of the truth of Christianity that hath no parallel in History.

If we reflect upon the end and purpose for which these miracles were wrought, we find it to have been worthy of God. It was to carry on one vast and consistent plan of Providence, extending itself from the creation to the consummation of all things, to establish a system of belief and practice plain and useful, being no other than the Religion of nature improved and enforced, revealed in part to the Jews, promised by the Prophets, and tending to destroy four moral evils, so prevalent and so pernicious, Atheism, Scepticism, Idolatry, and Vice.

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The supposition that no miracles were wrought in confirmation of the Gospel is not to be reconciled with the character, behaviour, and patient sufferings of Christ, of his Apostles, and of the Apostolical Christians; or with the successful progress of Christianity; or with those prophetical parts of the New Testament which have been fulfilled.

The casting out evil spirits, and the raising dead persons to life, are miracles which most particularly confirm the divine mission of Christ and his Apostles.

If evil spirits work any wonders by their own natural powers, it must be for evil purposes. It is impossible that he who commands them, rebukes them, compels them to own his superior power and to depart, should be assisted by them; or that they should combine to destroy their own dominion. Thus our Saviour reasons with great plainness and strength against the disingenuous and frivolous pretences of the Jews, that he cast out Devils by the assistance of the Devil.

So again; If there be a God, it is certain that when a man dies, his body returns to the earth, and his soul returns to God who gave it, and is in that place, whatsoever and wheresoever that place be, which God allots to it.

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When a man is dead, the materials of his body, and his living principle both subsist; but the man is perished and gone, and can never become a man again, unless God re-unite the soul again to an human body, and the raised man can be conscious to himself that he is the same person that he was before. Upon all suppositions, whether the soul dies or dies not with the body, this miracle cannot be performed without a power given and communicated by the God and Lord of Nature.

The Jews in the days of Christ denied not the reality of his miracles. They had another objection to them, founded upon a principle which was right in itself, but misapplied and abused by them. It was this, that miracles considered by themselves will not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of a teacher. They knew from their own Scriptures that the Magicians who contended with Moses wrought miracles, but were overpowered; and Moses had told them, that if a man calling himself a Prophet, and even giving signs and wonders in attestation of it, should entice them to forsake the Lord their God, and to commit Idolatry, they should pay no regard to him. Christ himself also spake of false

Christ who should shew signs and wonders. They said therefore that the doctrine of Christ being false, his miracles must have been the operations of evil Spirits. And if they could have made good their charge against his doctrine, they might have had an excuse for disregarding his miracles. But to his doctrine and to his conduct they had nothing to object besides frivolous cavils. They could not and they did not pretend to say that he had withdrawn them from worshipping the God of their fathers, or that he had seduced them to go after false Gods, or that he had rejected the sacred authority of Moses and the Prophets. These were the only cases excepted by the Scriptures, in which they might reject the testimony of miracles. Therefore their unbelief was excusable.

Thus then stand the evidences which we have of the truth of our religion.

Christ was foretold by the Prophets. Of the things predicted concerning him, some were miraculous, as his curing all diseases; some were improbable, as his converting the Gentiles, and destroying Idolatry; some were seemingly irreconcilable, as his prosperous and his afflicted condition, his majesty and his

his meanness, his sufferings and death, and his conquests and everlasting dominion; all of them were altogether beyond the reach of human conjecture and foresight, and yet in him all centered and were united and reconciled.

Thus the Old and New Testament mutually confirm and establish each other,

Christ knew the hearts of men, as he shewed upon all occasions; a knowledge which the Almighty represents in Scripture as so peculiar to himself, that he cannot be supposed to communicate it to persons who are not sent by him,

He was a Prophet; he foretold not only things remote, and lying beyond human sagacity, but things improbable and miraculous, which have been accomplished.

He wrought miracles numerous and various, but worthy of himself, suitable to his character, easy to be distinguished from impostures, full of compassion and benignity. Many of these miracles were also prophecies at the same time, and indications of future events; and so were most of his parables. Every part of Judæa was a witness to his wonders; cities, deserts, plains, mountains, land and sea, the temple, the synagogues, the streets, the public walks, and the

private houses. He went about doing good, and in all places he left the memorials of his power. When he died, he might have said with Jacob ; Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage ; fewer in number, and more distinguished with afflictions than those of the Patriarch. He was cut off in the midst of his age ; his ministry was soon ended ; his life was short, but not a moment of it was lost. Measure his days by his conquests over Sin and Satan, and by his benefactions to mankind, and they will seem to have been many.

He never erred or failed in any point, as teacher, prophet, Messias. All his promises were accomplished, particularly his remarkable promise that he would support those who should be called to suffer for his sake ; which was illustriously fulfilled in ancient and in modern Martyrs.

His religion was plain, popular, pure and holy, tending to make men wiser and better ; and it hath produced many good effects in the world. The noblest human effort to civilize and reform mankind was Philosophy ; but its efficacy upon the minds and manners of men was small compared to the influence of the Gospel.

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He lived and died an example of all that he taught, of all active and suffering virtues; so that the history of his life is a perfect system of morality, a system familiar and easy to be apprehended and applied, adapted for imitation, and containing the best directions and the strongest encouragement to well-doing.

Lastly, He hath had no rival and antagonist, to make his authority doubtful, by opposing prophecies to his prophecies, and miracles to his miracles.

It cannot be supposed that there should be any deceit in this complicated and concurring evidence, and that falsehood should boast of all the imaginable characters of truth.

Many efforts have been made to deprive us of Christianity, and to substitute in its place either no religion at all, or a sort of religion which in some respects is not so good even as Paganism; a Religion which they call Deism, or Natural Religion, but which indeed hath no pretensions to that name. Deism, rightly understood, as far as it goes, is just and true: it is, properly speaking, such a religion as a reasonable man would form to himself, who should be free from the prejudices of false revelations, and without a divine revelation to guide and assist

assist him. It is the belief of one Supreme God, of the moral duties, of a Providence, and of a future state of retribution. Such a religion as this I can scarcely find amongst our modern Unbelievers; but instead of it I have often found false and mean notions of the Deity, a very loose morality, doubts or denial of a future state, systems full of inconsistencies and contradictions, dictated by a spirit of insatiation, clouding their understandings, and blasting their endeavours. This may seem harsh, but it is true; and there is no occasion to stand upon complaisance and ceremony with writers who have done so much mischief in the loose and unthinking world, and deserve no better name than that of Enemies to Mankind.

S E R M O N XIII.

MALACHI iv. 5, 6.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

OF the prophecies relating to the Messias some were so obscure, and had such an appearance of inconsistency, if applied to one and the same person, that they could not well be understood, till the event reconciled and unfolded them; for which obscurity many good reasons have been assigned. But it is reasonable to suppose, that as the time of Christ's coming drew nearer, the later predictions concerning

cerning him should be more distinct and plain than the former. And so indeed they are; though even this light was not without a mixture of shade, which the Gospel alone could dissipate.

The last of the Prophets was Malachi, who flourished after the Jews had returned from captivity, and had built the second temple, and about four hundred years before Christ, whose coming he foretold; as it will appear;

First, by explaining his prophecies relating to the Messias:

Secondly, by shewing their accomplishment in Jesus Christ.

I. The Jews, after the deliverance from Babylon, had seen the completion of the prophecies concerning their captivity, and concerning their release and return to their own country. They were free from idolatry, and had now no disposition to adore the gods of their neighbours, and so far they were better than their ancestors. But in other respects they were base and wicked; and as unsettled people go from one extreme to another, they had exchanged a Pagan superstition for a kind of irreligious libertinism and cold indifference; and
this

this nation, which had once adored any and every idol, was become remiss in the worship of the true God. They had by their captivity been disused from the performance of several ceremonial ordinances, and they were not much disposed to return to a regular observance of them; and, which was worse, they were negligent practisers of the moral and everlasting law. Hence it appeared, if they would have seen and considered it, that God had delivered them from Babylon, as he had their forefathers from Ægypt, not at all for their merits or righteousness, but merely to carry on an important plan of Providence which should be unfolded in due time. The Divine Wisdom so ordered and conducted things, that from Jerusalem salvation should go forth, and from the tribe of Judah should arise the promised and the long-expected Deliverer.

Malachi in his prophecies reproaches the Jews for their ingratitude to God, who had so lately shewed them so much favour and mercy. He accuses them of irreligion and profaneness: he tells them that God abhorred their offerings, and would raise up to himself better worshippers amongst the Gentiles, to let them see that they were not, as they vainly imagined, the
only

only people by whom he could be served and honoured. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand: for from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered up unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.

After this, the Prophet proceeds to declare the coming of a very considerable person; Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

In these words are described two persons; first, the messenger of God, who should prepare the way before the Lord; and secondly, another person, who being called the Lord, and having a Prophet to go before him, must be one of the highest dignity.

The Lord whom ye seek shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. This promised person is called the Lord: but he cannot be the same Person

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Person with the Lord of hosts who speaks here, because he is also called the Angel or Messenger of the covenant, and therefore must be God's Messenger, and one sent by him. From his dignity, he is called the Lord; from his office, he is called the Messenger of the covenant.

He is called, The Lord whom ye seek, and in whom ye delight; that is, whom ye expect to see, and from whose coming you propose great advantage.

He shall come suddenly; that is, he will appear and surprise you immediately after the Messenger who goes before him has declared his approach. He shall come and shew himself suddenly, as a light breaking out of darkness.

He shall come to his temple. He will appear in the temple, in the house of God which many of you now despise and profane. It is observable, that the temple of God is called the temple of this promised Person; he shall come to his temple; which is a farther proof that he must be an extraordinary Person indeed, to whom the temple of God can in any sense be said to belong.

He

He is called, the Messenger of the covenant; the most obvious interpretation of which may be, that he should make and confirm a covenant between God and men. And what covenant could it be? The law was already given; that covenant had been long made and confirmed, and Moses was the messenger of the covenant; nor was there any occasion that it should be renewed. But we find in * Jeremiah that God had promised to make a new, a second, and a better covenant with his people, enlightening their understanding, and forgiving their sins, and increasing in them piety. Since then the first covenant had been already made, and since God had promised that he would enter into a new covenant with his nation, and then declared by Malachi, that he would send the Messenger of the covenant, it may be collected, that the Person here promised was to establish this new covenant between God and his people.

The description which Malachi gives of the first Messenger, who was to prepare the way before the Lord, and whom he afterwards calls Elias, agrees with this prophecy of Isaiah.

* Chap. xxxi. 31.

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The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make strait in the desert an high-way for our God. Hence it may be concluded, that Isaiah and Malachi speak of the same Messenger who was to prepare the way of the Lord.

Malachi proceeds to declare the office which this remarkable Person, called the Messenger of the covenant, was to sustain, and the ends and purposes for which he should appear.

Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering of righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

This great and desired Person shall undoubtedly come, saith the Prophet; but who may abide the day of his coming? and how few will be found fit to appear before him! He may be compared to fire which tries metals and purges them from the dross, and to soap which

cleanses garments ; for he shall pass a just and impartial judgment upon the lives and doctrines of his people, distinguishing false opinions from the word of God, and false appearances of holiness from true piety.

He shall find religion greatly corrupted, and the Priests and Levites as bad as those whom they should instruct ; but he shall correct all that is faulty, and so reform the worship of God, that it shall be again acceptable to him.

For behold the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.

The day of his coming shall be destructive to the wicked ; but to you who serve me, saith the Lord, it shall not be so. The Lord whom I shall send, and who shall be a devouring fire to the disobedient, shall be to you a Sun of Righteousness, he shall shine upon you, to enlighten your ways, and to heal and comfort you by his favourable influences.

And

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And ye shall tread down the wicked, and they shall be ashes under your feet: That is; Ye shall see the wicked perish, whilst ye escape.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet; before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

That is; My Messenger of whom I spake, and who is to prepare the way and declare the coming of the Lord, of the Angel of the covenant, shall be Elijah the Prophet; and his office shall be to excite the people to repentance, and to turn their hearts to me; lest I come, says God, and smite the earth with a curse; lest I come, appearing in the person whom I shall send, and who shall be invested with my authority, and finding no suitable reception, nor my people disposed to obey me, take vengeance and destroy them all, and make the land utterly desolate.

This was to be the office of Elias, or Elijah, the first Messenger, who was to prepare the way before the Lord; and from the context it may be judged what success he was to have.

He was to make some converts by his ministry, because it is said that he should turn the hearts of the fathers to, or with the children, and thereby avert the wrath of God and mitigate the severity of his judgments, and also that some would be found, to whom that day would be favourable, and on whom the Sun of Righteousness should arise with salvation in his rays. But it appears that he was not to produce a general reformation, because notwithstanding his endeavours, it is said that the day of the Lord should be terrible to many, that it should burn like an oven, and consume the ungodly.

It is remarkable that this Messenger is called Elijah. Elijah was a great Prophet, who lived in the time of Ahab, long before Malachi, and who had been taken up into heaven.

II. I proceed, secondly, to shew the completion of these predictions.

We may observe, that these were always accounted to be prophecies of the Messias, and that the Jews in our Lord's time had learned from Malachi to expect that Elijah should go before the Messias.

Jesus was the Lord whom the Jews sought, and in whom they delighted. They expected
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the Messias, particularly about the time when Christ was born, and proposed to themselves great advantages by his coming.

Jesus came suddenly into the temple, soon after the Baptist had declared him to be the Messias. He taught in that temple which after his death was destroyed, and never rebuilt more; nor did any one ever appear in that temple besides him, who could pretend to be the person foretold by this Prophet.

According to Malachi, the Messias was to come at a time when the Jews should have a temple; according to Haggai, he was to come whilst the * second temple stood, and by his sacred presence was to make it more glorious

* It hath been said that Christ came not whilst the second temple stood, but after a third temple had been built by Herod, and that consequently the prophecy of Haggai was not accomplished in this sense. The objection was never made to us by the Jews; for they always accounted Herod's temple as the second temple, and always called it so. And what Herod did might well be deemed rather a repairing and improving the second temple than the building of a third, because the daily sacrifice and the service of the temple never ceased during the work, nor was it taken down all at once. Since therefore none of the religious purposes for which the temple was erected were discontinued, it was not necessary that Herod's temple should have been distinguished from the second temple either by the Jews, or by the prophetic spirit.

and more honourable than the temple of Solomon had been.

Jesus came to *his* temple, to the temple which was his own; as he was the beloved and only begotten Son of God, and Lord of all things.

Jesus was the Messenger of the covenant. He came to reconcile God to men, to make the new and better covenant, requiring of us neither burdensome ceremonies, nor unfeigned obedience, but repentance and faith, and sincere endeavours to serve God, and promising us forgiveness, and assistance, and eternal life.

Jesus was a refiner's fire. He came to purge the world from sin. He refuted the errors of the Sadducees; he exposed and condemned the hypocrisy, the superstition, the false doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees; he required holiness, self-denial, resignation, patience, and charity of all who would be his disciples.

Jesus purified the sons of Levi. Since the Priests and Levites were appointed to minister before God, and to offer sacrifices for the people, if by the sons of Levi we understand the Jewish religion, to purify the sons of Levi will mean, to purify the divine worship from the errors and imperfections which obscured it.

If

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If by the sons of Levi we understand those who like the Levites are called to serve in the Church of God, those whose office is of the same nature with theirs, to purify the sons of Levi may mean, to raise up persons who shall duly and faithfully discharge the office of spiritual pastors and teachers.

If we take the sons of Levi to mean strictly the Jewish priests, the Messias was to purify and reform them.

In all these senses Christ purified the sons of Levi. He freed the Law and the worship of God from all defects and innovations, from all that was superfluous, burdensome, and temporary, from all that was national and personal, and that rendered it unfit for general use; he illustrated and enforced the moral law; he established a religion pure, rational, spiritual, universal, adapted to the capacities, to the wants, to the good of mankind; he chose holy persons to be teachers and pastors in his Church; and he called many of the sons of Levi; for St. Luke tells us, that a great company of the Priests were obedient to the faith.

Jesus Christ arose as a sun of righteousness with healing in his wings; he came to heal all diseases and infirmities of body and mind, to

be a light to lighten the world which lay in darkness, to instruct and to reform, and to expel ignorance and vice.

His coming was truly the great and terrible day of the Lord, the day which should burn like a devouring fire, and consume the wicked. For the Jews by rejecting him brought upon themselves the most dreadful calamities. Christ foretold the judgments which should befall them, and the desolation of their country which should avenge his death; and the event declared him to be a true prophet.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

This prophecy, as we are told by our Lord, relates to John the Baptist, and was accomplished in him. Elias cometh first, says our Saviour, and restoreth all things; but Elias, or John the Baptist, is already come.

Though the success of John's ministry had been less than it was, yet might he not improperly be said to turn the hearts of the people, and

and to restore all things, as he did all that was requisite for that purpose.

The office of Elias in Malachi was, to prepare the way of the Lord. John Baptist declared, that a greater than himself should come after him, who should take away the sins of the world, who should sever the good from the bad, and give up the latter to destruction, who should confer the holy Spirit on his disciples, who should be rejected by many of the Jews. This he declared; and this came to pass.

Elias in Malachi was, to turn the hearts of men, was to call the Jews to amendment, and to succeed in some degree. John the Baptist exhorted the people to repent, and to receive the Messias. The consequence was, that multitudes came to his baptism, confessing their sins, that most esteemed him, that several obeyed him, and received his testimony concerning Christ.

Elias in Malachi was not to succeed in his office so far as to cause a general conversion of the Jews. Many were to be disobedient, and to them the day of the Lord was to be great and terrible. Accordingly the Jews, who refused to hearken to the preaching of John and of Christ, perished in the destruction of their city.

Elias

Elias in Malachi was to convert several, and thereby to save them from destruction. They who acknowledged John to be the forerunner of the Messias, and believed in Christ, received remission of sins; nor were they partakers of spiritual blessings only, but were also delivered from temporal destruction. Our Lord, discoursing to his disciples of the days of vengeance which were approaching, gave them timely notice to fly from Jerusalem. And, as we are informed by ancient writers, the Christians retired, and escaped those calamities.

Then seems to have been accomplished this prophecy of Malachi, Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise, and ye shall tread down the wicked, and they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet. For the Christians left the unconverted Jews, and saw their utter ruin, and escaped it.

It has been objected that John the Baptist was not Elias, and therefore not the person foretold by Malachi. But in many things he resembled Elias, and came, as the Angel said of him, in the spirit and power of Elias; like Elias in his prophetic office, in living in a corrupted age, in fervent zeal, in restoring decayed religion, in rebuking vice, in suffering persecu-

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tion for righteousness sake, in offending wicked Priuces by reprovng them for their sins, like him in austeritv of life, in habit, and in dwelling in retired places

He might therefore be called Elias, according to the prophetic style; for thus Jeremiah, Ezechiel, and Hosea call some future person by the name of David, who had been long dead. Jeremiah, speaking of a deliverance of the Jews, says, They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King. Ezechiel in like manner prophesies, I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David their King. Hosea says, that the children of Israel after long calamities shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king. It is manifest that these prophets describe under the name of David some great person to come, who should be, as David was, a ruler and deliverer of his people, by whose assistance, and under whose protection, they should enjoy many blessings *. By David, in these predictions, the Messias is generally understood,

It

* The Jews never so interpreted these prophecies last-mentioned, as to imagine that David should again rule over them; and yet they were of opinion that Elias should come before the Messias, because he

It is true that John, being asked by the Jews whether he were Elias, answered, that he was not; and this he might truly say, because he was not the Elias whom they meant, though he was the person foretold under that name.

By the ministry of our Lord and his Apostles is that remarkable passage in Malachi fulfilled; From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles. By the preaching the Gospel, the Gentiles, who for so many ages had been strangers to true religion, were converted; and the name of God, unknown to them before, was honoured and adored.

he was named in Malachi. The reason seems to have been this; David was dead and buried, and his sepulchre was with them, and they thought it not so probable that he should rise from the dead to receive the kingdom a second time. But Elias had been taken up alive into heaven, and above all persons seemed the most likely to return to them again.

Yet the Pharisees, who are said to have held either a transmigration of souls, or a resurrection and return to life in this world for the righteous, might have supposed a second reign of David. And if John the Baptist had declared himself to be Elias, they who entertained such notions, and who accounted John to be a Prophet, would have given credit to his affirmation. For so of Christ, some said that he was John the Baptist returned to life; others Elias, others Jeremiah, or one of the old Prophets risen again.

Of this happy change our own nation is an illustrious example. The state of our Pagan ancestors in Britain was a state of low barbarity and gross ignorance; but the Sun of Righteousness shone upon us, and dispelled this darkness, and civilized our manners. Afterwards when Christianity was every-where debased and corrupted, no nation was more grievously oppressed and pillaged than ours by the tyranny of the church of Rome, and the rapacious avarice of wicked Popes; but from this sordid and miserable bondage the Reformation released us; and when we were in danger of relapsing into the same vile hands, God again delivered us. Thankfulness, and a due sense of these benefits, is the only way to secure to us the same protection; as ingratitude, irreligion, and a dissolution of manners may justly bring down his indignation upon a wicked people, and take from them blessings which they neither value nor deserve.

What hath befallen others, may befall us. Many celebrated Christian societies have failed and perished long ago; many are so decayed, that they seem near to destruction. The Seven Churches of the Lesser Asia, to which our Lord addresses himself in the Revelation of St. John,

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are no more to be found. The numerous Churches which once flourished on the African coast, are now a nest of Mahometan Pirates. Other ancient Churches are destroyed, together with the cities in which they were established. The Greek Churches of the East are in a low condition, both as to temporals and as to spirituals. The Church of Rome is corrupted beyond them all. And what security hath our Church from undergoing the same fate?

There is indeed no probability that we should relapse into the ancient Paganism, the memory of which is preserved in ancient Authors. That kind of Idolatry died many ages ago, and can rise again no more. There is no probability that we should embrace Mahometism, the religion of nations with which we have little or no intercourse; a religion most groundless and absurd. There is no probability that we should adopt the religion of the dispersed Jews, who are in no condition to make proselytes, and whose religion is not at all alluring. Against Popery we ought ever to be upon our guard; yet it is to be hoped that we shall not return to that ignominious bondage; for Popery itself is manifestly on the decline, and in these days it hath received deep wounds from the hands of those

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those Princes who were its best friends and protectors. But there is another kind of evil with which we are threatened. The spirit of this age is a spirit of irreligion and unbelief, particularly amongst those whose education, fortunes, and stations ought to have taught them better things.

But our Saviour hath assured us, that his Church is founded upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It will subsist in some part or other of the earth, and withstand all opposition, till those brighter times ensue, which the prophetic parts of Scripture give us reason to expect, when the kingdom of Christ shall be in a more flourishing condition, and peace and prosperity shall be the effects of piety and probity.

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**THE DOCTRINE
OF
A FUTURE STATE,**

**AS IT MAY BE COLLECTED FROM
THE OLD TESTAMENT.**

**WITH
FOUR CHARGES**

**TO THE
CLERGY OF THE ARCHDEACONRY OF LONDON.**

Vol. VII.

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THE DOCTRINE
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HEB. xi. 13.
These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

THE Author of this Epistle to the Hebrews, that is, to the believing Jews of Judæa, shews them the great danger of Apostasy from the Gospel, exhorts them to endure sufferings for the sake of righteousness with patience, and resolution, and perseverance, as knowing that they should be gloriously rewarded in the world to come, and encourages them to sustain themselves with these hopes

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through faith, or a full persuasion that God would fulfil his promises to them. He proceeds to shew the excellence of faith, of a trust in God, and the happy effects which it had upon their forefathers, and upon all good men from the beginning of the world. He instanceth in Abel, Enoch, Noah, and afterwards in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who, like other holy men recorded in Scripture, through faith obtained a good report, and pleased God, and were supported under all difficulties, troubles, and trials which they experienced, who firmly relied upon the goodness and veracity of God, and having received promises from him of blessings relating both to themselves and to their posterity, lived and died in a firm belief that God would make good all those promises, though they did not see the accomplishment of them in this world.

“ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Which words present two things to our consideration :

I. That

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I. That the good men recorded in the Old Testament, who lived before and under the Law, expected a future state of happiness :

II. That all men ought, in imitation of those holy persons, to look upon themselves as upon strangers and sojourners on earth, and to entertain dispositions suitable to such a persuasion.

I. The good men who lived before and under the Law expected a future state of happiness.

It was an objection formerly made by the Manichæans, and since by others, * to the Jewish system, and to the Old Testament, that it taught † nothing concerning an other and a better life, and confined the views, expectations, hopes and fears of men to the present state of things. The objection, from what quarter soever it came, was plausible, and if the fact could not be denied, lay heavy upon the Jewish religion. Let us see whether we can remove it.

The doctrine of a future state seemeth not to be so clearly and expressly delivered in the Old

* Amongst whom is Lord Bolingbroke.

† Uriel Acosta, after having embraced Judaism, became a Sadducee, being persuaded that the rewards and punishments of the Mosaic Law related only to the present life. *Bayle, ACOSTA.*

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Testament as one could expect. There are many places where the subject itself invited the sacred Writers to speak of another world, as where they propose exhortations to obedience, and dissuaves from vice; where they treat of God's goodness, and mercy, and wisdom, and justice; of the unequal dispensations of Providence, of the prosperity of the ungodly, of the vanity of earthly things, and the shortness and troubles of human life; and yet in all these places either no mention is made of a future state, or something is said which is, or which at least seems liable to controversy, capable of different interpretations, and not altogether free from ambiguity and obscurity. The antiquity of the sacred Books, the dead language in which they are written, the present poverty and scantiness of that language, which seems never to have been copious, perspicuous and polished, though not so defective neither as some have represented it, the want of authors either cotemporary, or approaching nearly to those remote times, may perhaps contribute in a great measure to these doubts and difficulties.

Thus much however we may collect and conclude, that our Saviour was the first sacred Teacher, who in a full and clear manner delivered

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livered to men, and particularly to the Gentiles, the important truths of the remission of sins, a resurrection, a future judgment, and an impartial distribution of recompenses and punishments in that everlasting state which should take place at the end of the world.

As eternal happiness is a very different thing from a state of retribution; so may the kingdom which he hath promised to his own followers be different from a state of peace and serenity in some of the various mansions in our Father's house.

Our Lord indeed found the doctrine of a future state established amongst the Jews, and not quite obliterated amongst the Gentiles; yet he might truly be said to bring immortality to light, or to throw a new light upon the doctrine of immortality, as this doctrine was better proved and confirmed by him than it was before, and as the Gospel speaks of an *eternal* and *unchangeable* happiness, which may be obtained by serving God, and which neither human reason can discover, nor any former revelation had expressly declared.

The doctrine of a future state of retribution, at large and in general, is consistent enough with an uncertainty whether the state of the good

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may not be blended with some inconveniences, although their happiness shall preponderate upon the whole, or whether there may not be other states of trial, and an ascent and descent of human souls, according to their merits and defects, through all eternity.

But though the Gospel in this respect surpasseth all previous declarations of the divine will, yet it would be an error to suppose that nothing concerning another life was believed by good men before the coming of Christ. There are so many things related in the Old Testament, from each of which the probability of a future state may not unreasonably be inferred, and when they are collected and compared together, they give so much light and strength to each other, that the whole must lead us to think that the good men, who lived before Christ, expected a state of peace and happiness after death, and that they had just grounds for this expectation. If we cannot prove this point by single texts, we can prove it by facts, and by plain inferences from those facts. *Texts* may be ambiguous and difficult, but *facts* speak a language which every one can understand.

That

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That good men ever entertained such hopes, the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares in the chapter whence the text is taken. He tells us, that they all lived and died in faith; and of faith he says, that it is the firm expectation of things hoped for, and the evidence by which we are assured of things not seen. By the things hoped for, we are to understand such good things as we may expect to receive from God, founding that expectation upon his perfections or upon his promises. By the things not seen, are meant the being of God, who is no object of our senses, and the rewards of righteousness, particularly those in the life to come. This is faith, without which, says he, it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, and is resolved to perform his duty to him, must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; and consequently, that when he rewards them not in this life, he will do it in the life to come. By this faith Abraham looked for a city, whose builder and maker is God, that is, an heavenly city; by this faith the Patriarchs, confessing themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on earth, plainly declared that they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly; by this Moses chose

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rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward, and endured as seeing him who is invisible ; by this faith the Martyrs under the Law chose to be tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection,

“ I think it very probable that God’s promises in the Old Testament, of temporal rewards to the righteous, had a secret and implicit regard to the future state which in the New Testament is so clearly and distinctly revealed. —After the giving of the Law, wherein almost all the promises and threatenings were temporal, and which consequently could not be made out to be exact, unless they were understood as typically representing a more perfectly equitable distribution hereafter, yet holy men, without being able to apprehend particularly in what manner it would be accomplished, depended upon it, as the certain and unalterable nature and will of God, that by some means or other every man should appear finally to be exactly recompensed according as his work should be. —Providence suffers the righteous to be involved promiscuously in many calamities with the

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the wicked. The Jews, to whom were made special promises of temporal good, yet had experience enough of this truth, to raise their minds from the enjoyment of this world to the expectation of a better." *S. Clarke* *.

"The Jews under the Law had such apprehensions of their own immortality, and of a future state of happiness and misery after this life, as natural light suggested to them.—But the Law did rather suppose it, than give any new force and life to it." *Tillotson* †.

That God was good, and intended that our duty and our true interest should be inseparable; that he would reward men for their obedience, if not in this world, yet in another; that there should be a state besides this, in which it should be well with his servants; these truths are such as result from the nature of God, and from the nature of man, and from the unequal dispensations of Providence; and human reason will lead a careful, an unprejudiced, and a virtuous inquirer into a belief, at least into a hope, of such a state. There are certainly many things recorded in the Books of

* *Serm.* 145, 148, 150.

† *Serm.* 51. *Vol.* II. and in many other places, particularly in *Serm.* 23. *Vol.* I. See also Van Leewen, in the *Bibl. Univ.* VIII. p. 534.

Moses,

Moses, in confirmation of this great article of natural religion.

The history of the fall of man is attended with many difficulties : I shall consider only just as much of it as relates to our present subject.

There are some who reject the literal account, and suppose the whole to be an allegory, apologue, or moral fable. This opinion they should have supported, by offering an unforced and consistent interpretation of each part of the story ; as we often can do in fixing the moral sense and application of some other ancient fables and parables. But here they are at a loss, and produce nothing that is satisfactory.

As the history of the creation was intended to inculcate the important doctrine of one supreme God and universal Father, the history of the fall was designed to account for the origin of natural and moral evils amongst men. It absolves God from being the cause of them, and it doth not ascribe them to the irresistible power of Fate, or of an evil Principle ; but it lays the fault upon our first parents, yielding to a temptation which they might have rejected, and abusing their own liberty and power of choosing.

According

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According to the Mosaic account, God made man good and upright, and put him in a state of trial, and gave him, besides the moral law written in the heart, one positive precept.

God made him mortal; his body was like ours, and therefore must have been destroyed by accidents, or dissolved by length of time, unless his Creator miraculously interposed.

God threatened him that he should die, if he transgressed the positive precept. Thence it seems probable that the first man, being naturally mortal, and made to multiply his kind, would, if he had never wilfully and deliberately transgressed, after a sufficient length of trial, and after he had raised up a family of sons and daughters, have been removed from the earth, and transformed into the nature of Angels, and so might perhaps have been a guardian Angel to his posterity, and permitted to visit and instruct his children. The same may be supposed of the mother of mankind.

When Adam was told, that if he offended he should die, he could not then understand by death a future punishment after death, but rather an annihilation of his soul and a dissolution of his body, and a returning to the same
infern-

insensibility from which he had been called into being.

He offended, and was told, that God would not interpose to save him from death, but that he should certainly return to the dust.

His life, however, was continued and prolonged; and thence, I think, he might collect the immortality of his soul, and the expectation of a future state. It was not to be supposed that a good and gracious God would punish more severely than he had threatened; it was much rather to be hoped and expected that he would mercifully remit the rigour of his threatenings upon repentance and amendment, especially to the father of all future generations, to the first man, to his own child; for Adam was the son of God in a more peculiar manner than any other mere man. If death had been an annihilation, it might be supposed that God would have inflicted it upon him immediately; for a life protracted and continued to a rational creature, naturally desirous of immortality, who is assured that he must die, who unhappily brought upon himself the sentence of death by one single offence, and who accounts death to be an utter extinction, seems to be a severer punishment than taking away the

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the life as soon as it is forfeited ; which is all that was threatened. Adam therefore might reasonably conceive hopes that length of days was granted to him for kind and merciful purposes, that he might recover the divine favour, and qualify himself by repentance and obedience for a better state in another world.

Adam and his consort lived together many years, and had sons and daughters, and brought them up in religious sentiments, in the fear and the love of God. They taught their children at stated times to offer up sacrifices, and doubtless prayers and praises along with them, those spiritual and rational sacrifices. Thence I also conclude that they taught them the doctrine of a future state of retribution, a doctrine essential to religion, and without which, though morality towards men may possibly be exercised, yet religion or piety towards God cannot well subsist.

The history of Adam, as delivered to us by Moses, is extremely concise ; and it is reasonable to suppose, that both before and after the fall, he had revelations not mentioned in the Scriptures, and that God, by the ministry of Angels, or by the divine *Λόγος*, instructed him in many things, and gave him hopes of
being

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being accepted upon his repentance and obedience, and added some declarations of his good-will to mankind, which in due time should be made manifest.

The doctrine of a future state of retribution, or of a resurrection, implies by consequence that the soul is not annihilated at death, but still subsists after the dissolution of the body. For upon the supposition that death is the extinction of the soul, a second life would not be a resurrection or another state of the same individual, but a new creation of a new person, different in all respects from the former. And if this new person should imagine and remember himself to be the same person with one who lived before, and should ascribe to himself the good and the evil deeds of the former person, this would be a delusion, and a false consciousness imposed upon him by his Creator; which is not to be admitted. Such are the consequences of the doctrine that the soul is a mere quality, that it is naturally mortal, and perisheth when the man dies.

Of the two sons of Adam, the one was righteous, and the other wicked; the one was favoured of God, the other incurred his displeasure. And what was the consequence? It was, that

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that Cain through malice and envy slew his innocent brother, because God had testified his approbation of him, and had given him the preference, and that Abel fell in the flower of his age, and his piety was his destruction. This we may call a moral demonstration of a future state, which God gave to Adam and to his family; for since he did not protect the person whose virtue he approved, it was necessary that he should recompense him in some manner. Thus began the unequal dispensations of Providence as to this life, and they have continued from that day to this, and have been a perpetual indication of another life to all wise and good men. The inequality of Providence is one proof of a future state; but besides this, there are other proofs no less conclusive and satisfactory.

As to Cain, after he had committed this heinous crime, and was banished from the presence of God and of his parents, he lived, and had children, and built houses: and who knows whether God did not grant him length of days, that he might humble himself, and repent, and not perish everlastingly? Both these considerations might be a support and a comfort

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fort to Adam under his affliction, that his deceased son was with God, and that the survivor had time and opportunity to make his peace, and obtain a future pardon by sorrow and amendment.

Before the flood, Enoch was translated, and was not, for God took him ere he had lived half his days; which, if God had not removed him to a better place and a happier condition, would have been an untimely death to this world, and not, as we are told it was, a reward of his walking with God, of his exemplary virtue.

God promised to Abraham, that his son Isaac, whom he had received miraculously in his old age, should be the father of a numerous posterity. Afterwards he commanded him to sacrifice this son. The seeming inconsistency of this command and this promise was at first sight a difficulty; but it was in reality the solution of all difficulties; for the only method by which Abraham could reconcile the one with the other, was a supposition that God, who could not deceive, or break his covenant, would raise up Isaac from the dead. By this persuasion, as the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews truly observes, he was supported and

animated. This was his faith, for which he was so celebrated; and his faith was great, if we consider that it is very hard for a father to slay his beloved child, and that Abraham had never seen or heard of an example of a resurrection.

Abraham then believed that God could raise the dead; and they who believed this, believed in all probability the continuance of the soul after death; as, on the contrary, those Gentiles who thought that the soul was material, and that death was the dissolution of it, accounted a resurrection or restoration to life to be a natural impossibility. The * particles of which a man is composed, and which are diffipated after death, may possibly meet again, said the Epicureans, in the endless revolutions of future ages, by the power of Time and Chance, and may again become a living man: but the consciousness and recollection once lost and gone

* Nec, si materiam nostram collegerit ætas,
Post obitum, rursusque redegerit, ut sita nunc est,
Atque iterum nobis fuerint data lumina vitæ,
Pertineat quicquam tamen ad nos id quoque factum,
Interrupta semel cum sit repentina nostra
Et nunc nil ad nos de nobis attinet, ante
Qui fuimus, nec jam de illis non afficit angor,
Quos de materia nostra nova proferat ætas.

Lucretius III. 859.

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are lost to all eternity ; and therefore a man can never become the same person again.

When God called Abrahāam, he made him singular and magnificent promises : I am thy shield, and thy reward shall be exceeding great. The same promises were repeated to Isaac and to Jacob. But how were these promises fulfilled to them ? They did indeed receive temporal blessings, a numerous family, and wealth, and some signal deliverances ; but these blessings were blended with many evils. They had several domestic troubles, they were often exposed to ill usage, they had no settled home, no lands of their own, except a grave, a field which they purchased for a burying-place, but wandered about as strangers and sojourners, and then left this world, in which Jacob testifies that the days of his pilgrimage had been few and evil, and in which they had found no such thing as true happiness.

Natural it was and obvious to conclude from this, that so great and magnificent promises of God were to be made good to them in a more illustrious manner, that they did not terminate in flocks and in herds, and in a fruitful country which their posterity was to enjoy ; but that when this short life, with its unsatisfactory pleasures

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pleasures and with its various evils, was over, they dwelt with God in his kingdom.

After these good men were dead, God says to Moses, that he is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. When God is said to be the God of any person, it means, to be his protector and his benefactor. I will be their God, that is, I will be * good and gracious unto them. When therefore God says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that after they were dead, it is a proof that at their death they did not cease to exist, for then all relation between them and God would have ceased, because God is not the God of nothing, of that which was and is not; it is also a proof that God was and is their benefactor, and the rewarder of their obedience.

“God † is not ashamed to be called their God; which implies, that if nothing had been meant by it beyond this world, this promise of God’s being their God would have fallen shamefully short of what it seemed to import. And this I conceive to be the true reason why our Saviour lays so much weight upon this promise, as to pitch upon it for the proof of the resurrection;

* See Le Clerc on *Gen.* xvii. 18.

† *Hebr.* xi. 16.

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that is, of a future state of happiness in another world." *Tillotson* *.

When the inhabitants of Sodom and the neighbouring cities had offended God by their wicked deeds, he resolved to destroy them; and we are told that there were not even ten righteous persons to be found amongst those profligate people; but without question there must have been some hundreds of children, who were in a state of innocence; and yet † they all perished in a moment with their wicked parents.

When Pharaoh and his people had deserved divine punishments, amongst the plagues which were inflicted upon them, one was the death of all the first-born. As they had destroyed the young children of the Israelites, so God dealt with them according to the law of retaliation, and destroyed their children. But most of these children had committed no offence to bring down this evil upon themselves.

In the wilderness, Corah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses and against God, and came out and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and

* *Serm. 14. Vol. II.*

† See Le Clerc on *Gen. xix.*

their

their little children,—and the earth swallowed them up; they and all that appertained to them went down alive into the pit.

In the wars which the people of Israel waged with the Canaanites and some other nations, they slew all the inhabitants, men, women, and male children; and this was done by divine command.

If any city of the Israelites should be guilty of idolatry, the nation was ordered to destroy the place, and every creature that lived there.

When Achan had stolen some of the spoils which were devoted to the Lord, Joshua and all Israel took him, and his sons, and his daughters, and all that he had, and stoned them, and burnt them with fire.

Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites; and the commandment of God was, Go and smite Amalek, and spare them not, but slay man and woman, infant and suckling.

When the * children of the inhabitants of Bethel mocked the Prophet Elisha, he † cursed them in the name of the Lord, and there came forth two she-bears, and tare forty-two children of them.

* 2 Kings ii. 24. where see Le Clerc.

† Josephus hath omitted this story.

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In these and many other instances, we see the guilty and the innocent involved in the same destruction by the express command or by the miraculous power of God. Upon the supposition of a future state, there is no difficulty in this: for God, who is the God of those that are dead to men, can adjust all such inequalities of providence in another world; but without this solution it seems impossible to reconcile it with the divine justice or goodness.

God gave the Law to the Israelites by Moses, and in that law promises, as well as threatenings, which literally interpreted were merely temporal. But the Law, if it added no proofs of another state, yet surely could not take away the causes which good men, from other indications, had to hope and expect it, nor extinguish the light of Reason, that Lamp of God, which guides every careful and wise and unprejudiced inquirer, and gives him a distant view of another and a better state.

Amongst the laws which God gave by Moses, is this: “* Ye are the children of the

* *Deuter. xiv. 1.*

Solon, and from him the Romans in the *Twelve Tables*, made laws of the same kind. Plutarch, *Solon*, Cicero *de Leg. ii. 26.*

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Lord your God : ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead."

God would not permit them to imitate the excessive lamentations and the frantic behaviour of the Gentiles at their funeral rites. And this * seems to have been a direction to them, not to sorrow like men without hope, as the Apostle expresses it, but to expect another state besides the present.

Joshua * says to Achan ; My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel.

Hence may be collected, as Grotius observes, some expectation of the soul's continuance after death ; for by what other motive could this miserable man be induced to confess a capital crime, for which he and all his family were doomed to inevitable destruction ? It appears to have been an opinion amongst the Jews, that the pardon of such crimes could be obtained of God by ingenuously confessing them, and patiently undergoing the death which the Law required.

* Spencer *De Leg. Hebr.* L. ii. c. 19. § 2.

† *Josh.* vii. 19.

In the beginning of the book of Job we read that he had seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and seven sons, and three daughters. He lost all these suddenly and miraculously.

In the end of the book we read that God, to recompense his piety and patience, gave him twice as much as he had before. So the Lord blessed the latter-end of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen; and a thousand she-asses; and he lived, after he was restored to a state of prosperity, an hundred and forty years, which probably was twice the number of days which he had seen before his afflictions. He had also seven sons and three daughters.

The sacred Writer is particular in enumerating these double blessings, and in observing that he had not the double number of children, but only just as many as he had lost; and this seems to be an * indication that the dead do not cease to exist,

* Addidit Deus duplicia. De possessionibus intellige, non de liberis. Causam reddunt Hebræi, quia & liberi priores ei manebant apud Deum. *Grotius.*

Suppose

Suppose that there be another state, and that the children of Job were in an happy condition, he then received just the double, counting those who were alive, and those who were dead. But on the contrary supposition, Job, who had the double of every thing else, had only the same of that which was the most valuable and desirable. Upon the whole, therefore, there is reason to think that this circumstance was inserted in the history of Job, to confirm, or to insinuate at least, the doctrine of another and a better life.

Suppose the book of Job to be an allegory, a parable, or moral fable, yet the remark which we have made will still hold good ; for in a parable, if it be one, the due proportion between the loss and the recompense should be observed.

Besides ; Unless Job could comfort himself with the reflection that his dead children were in another and a better state, his having even twice or thrice the number given to him would not have compensated the loss of those who had perished, and the remembrance of the sudden and untimely destruction of all his poor young family would have been a perpetual fountain of sorrow, embittering the pleasures of

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of his prosperous condition ; and for the truth of this we may appeal to every parent. Sheep and oxen, and gold and silver may be lost and retrieved again, for one sheep and one piece of money is as good as another of the same value: but the loss of a hopeful child in the flower of his age is eternal and irretrievable, unless there be a fair presumption that his departure hence is to his advantage.

In the first book of Samuel we read, that Saul went to a woman who had a familiar spirit, and desired her to raise the ghost of Samuel, and conversed, as he imagined, with the spirit of that Prophet ; from which account thus much may undoubtedly be concluded, that Saul, though he was no religious prince, believed the continuance of the soul after death, and that consequently it was the common opinion in his time.

“ From this story thus much at least may be proved, that the Jews, as well as other eastern people, did at that time believe the immortality of the soul : and this perhaps is the best proof that the Old Testament affords, to shew that the ancient Hebrews were not without hopes after death.” *Le Clerc,*

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* See
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The concessions of Grotius and Le Clerc are the more to be noted, because they inclined to the opinion that little concerning a future state was to be found in the Old Testament.

In Leviticus it is said;

“Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards.”

And in *Isaiah*;

“Thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.”

From * these passages, compared with the story of Saul, it appears that the Magicians were supposed to raise the dead, and the souls to answer them in a low and scarcely intelligible voice.

Now in all times and nations, wheresoever there was an opinion of spirits good and evil, and of their operations, and of the evocation of the dead, there must have been, as the foundation of it, a general persuasion that the soul survived the body. The arts indeed of

* See Le Clerc on *Levit.* xix. 31. and on *Isaiah* xxix. 4. and Vitringa on *Isaiah* ii. 6, xxix. 4,

magicians

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magicians might be tricks and illusions; but the doctrine itself of another life was so conformable to the hopes and to the reason of mankind, that it must have met with a wide reception both from the learned and from the unlearned.

We are assured by Greek Historians, that the *Ægyptians* believed the immortality of the soul, and that this notion was extremely ancient among them; and we know from sacred history, that in the time of *Moses* they were a great and a learned nation, and that they had their magicians, which is also a proof that they believed the existence of spirits and invisible agents. The children of *Israel* had dwelt long with them, and had a strong inclination to adopt their notions and ways. If the *Israelites* had not received the doctrine of another state by tradition from their own ancestors, yet in all probability they would have taken it from the *Ægyptians*, since it is a notion which all men are naturally disposed to entertain, being all inclined to hope and to fear something beyond the grave.

It is said of *Solomon*, in the first book of *Kings*, that his wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all
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the wisdom of *Ægypt*. But if the *Ægyptians* admitted a future state, and Solomon admitted it not, it must needs be owned that in this respect the wisdom of the *Ægyptians* surpassed not a little the wisdom of Solomon.

The Chinese empire seems to have been one of the most ancient, and also the last that was corrupted by gross idolatry and image-worship. For a long series of ages they had no communication with other nations, except perhaps some of their near neighbours. They who have given us the most accurate account of this people assure us, that from the remotest antiquity they believed in one supreme God, many inferior spirits or Angels, the immortality of the soul, and the happiness of the righteous after death. Hence it may be supposed that this was the religion of mankind at the time when colonies were first planted in various parts of the earth. That whilst the Chinese retained these doctrines, the Hebrews should have lost them, is altogether improbable.

In the second book of Kings we read, that God took up the prophet Elijah into heaven, and that his successor Elisha raised to life the son of the Shunamite, as Elijah had before raised the son of the widow of Zarephath; and
that

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that "Elisha died and was buried, and the bands of the Moabites invaded the land. And as they were burying a man, they spied a band, and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha : and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet."

Nothing is more evident than that these miracles supported in a particular manner the important doctrine of a future state. The most ignorant and obstinate, if they were to behold a righteous man and an illustrious prophet taken up into heaven, and the dead raised to life, would be inclined to conclude that there was another state besides this, and that the soul doth not perish and cease to be when death separates it from the body ; and the wise and learned would make the same conclusions. We may therefore suppose that after these signal miracles this doctrine was more fully confirmed, and received with greater assurance by the Jews. And indeed it wanted such confirmation at that period. Times of great wickedness and of as great calamities ensued ; the ten tribes were dispersed and carried away, to return no more, and the remaining Jews of the tribe of Judah, during the Babylonian captivity, were banished

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from the land of promise, cast into an idolatrous country, reduced to a low state, and lay under strong temptations to quit their religion for worldly advantages, and could have little else than the hopes of a better world to support them under their distress, and to keep up their faith and their confidence in God.

In those days lived Cyrus, that great and virtuous prince, who, as Xenophon informs us, made a speech at his death to his friends and family, in which he expressed his belief and hope of the soul's immortality. This illustrious King shewed kindness to the captive Jews, and set them free; and he had the honour to be mentioned with praise in the holy Scriptures, and to be prophesied of by name. It is thought by * Grotius, that he acquired the notion of the immortality of the soul, in some measure from the Jews, as likewise the doctrine of one God, maker of heaven and earth.

In those days also lived Daniel and Ezechiel, in whose prophecies are contained some intimations of a future state, and of a recompense of the righteous in that state.

“Augustin and other Fathers acknowledge, that even under the dispensation of the Law

* On *Isaiah* xlv. 5.

there

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there were religious persons who hoped for better than mere worldly and transitory blessings. But, say they, this they learned, not from the Law, but from the Patriarchs, to whom God by many indications had given encouragement to expect higher rewards; amongst which indications this is none of the least, that many excellent men found very little happiness and prosperity in the world; an argument upon which the Writer to the Hebrews largely insists. The same Fathers add, that the temporal good things promised in the Law of works were emblems and figures of the blessings which should accompany the Law of the Spirit.

That the people during the Babylonian captivity might not apostatize from their religion, the prophet Daniel first, and after him Ezechiel, made use of the word *rising again*, a word ambiguous indeed, but supposed to contain in it something very great and desirable. And the wiser Jews thought it expedient, by affixing a sublimer sense to the words of Daniel, to fortify the people against temptations, by propounding the hopes of a more glorious state to those who should lose the present life for the sake of God: which doctrine then

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began to be brought to light, and taught in express words. Nor was the immortality of the soul only then propounded and received, but also a *resurrection*, or a certain recuperation of the body, as it manifestly appears from *Hebr.* xi. and from *Acts* xxiii. 8. to which are to be added two remarkable passages from the History of the Maccabees, xi. 7." *Grotius* *.

"Whereas St. Paul, *Acts* xxvi. 6. styles the resurrection, the promise made to their fathers, and saith, the twelve tribes served God in expectation of it, this needs a little explication, because many deny that any such promise was made to the fathers, or can be found in the Old Testament. I therefore assert;

First, that it is evident from the history of the Maccabees, &c. that the Jews did then believe the resurrection.

Secondly, that they conceived this hope was built upon the covenant of God made with them, and the promise of God made to them.

Thirdly, that they had just reason both from the Law and the Prophets for this hope. From the Law, for thence our Saviour proves the resurrection. — From the Prophets; the words of Daniel being these; *Many of them*

* On *Matt.* v. 20.

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that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting confusion. Where note, that though men in misery and affliction are sometimes said to sit or dwell in the dust, yet *οἱ κοιμῶντες* they that *sleep* in the dust doth always signify they that die, and hath no other sense in scripture. And though men that sit in the dust may be raised out of that afflicted into a comfortable state, yet seeing they must shortly die, they can in no propriety of speech be said to arise to *life eternal*.—*I worship the God of our fathers*, saith St. Paul, *believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets, having hope that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust.*—*I say nothing but what is contained in the Law and in the Prophets, that Christ shall be the first, ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν*, of those that rise from the dead; plainly insinuating, that the resurrection of others after Christ was contained in the Law and the Prophets. Hence the Apostle tells us, that the champions of the Jewish Church all died in faith, in expectation of a better resurrection.

This hope was rightly built upon the covenant of God, that he would be their God—and

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he was therefore called their God, because he had prepared for them an heavenly city.

A Messiah was promised to them ; and it was one of the fundamental articles of the Jews, that their Messiah shall raise the dead, and bring them into Paradise.

Lastly, this seems evident from the nature of the thing ; for God being the Father of our spirits, which are immortal, it is absurd to think his promises to the obedient should relate only to this present life, and yet he should engage them to be faithful to the death, and suffer here the worst of evils for his sake ; since if they had only hope in this life, they must of all men be most miserable." *Whitby* *.

There is a sublime and beautiful passage in Isaiah †, where the dead kings and princes are described as coming forth to meet the king of Babylon, and insulting over him.

" Hell from beneath is moved for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? art thou become like unto us ? "

* On *Acts* xxvi. 6.

† *C.* xiv.

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Ezechiel * hath imitated Ifaiah, and fays, that the king of Ægypt with his people ſhould fall by the ſword, and deſcend into hell, into the place of the dead ; and that other princes who had been cut off in war ſhould come about him, and ſpeak to him ; and that he ſhould be comforted with the conſideration that he had ſo many companions who had ſhared the ſame fate.

Now though in a parable, or poetic fiction, every part is not to be urged as literally true, yet do theſe representations fairly imply, that it was at leaſt a vulgar opinion, that the ſouls of the dead went to ſome common receptacle, and continued to be and to act, and were neither deſtroyed nor ſenſeleſs.

Befides, The bulk of the Jews believed, and were taught in the ſacred writings to believe the being of Angels and of evil Dæmons, that is, of ſpiritual agents, not united to groſs bodies, nor ſubject to the law of mortality. From this we may ſuppoſe that they believed the ſeparate and the future exiſtence of the ſoul ; for theſe two opinions ſo conſtantly go together, that no nation, and perhaps no man, ever believed the one who did not believe the other.

* C. xxxii.

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The Sadducees rejected both, as thinking that they must stand or fall together.

Afterwards, in the Apocryphal writers, several passages occur which most clearly and confessedly denote their belief of a life to come; and examples are there recorded of Martyrs who were tortured, and laid down their lives, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. It hath been also observed, that the word sometimes used by those writers for death, is a word which meaneth *departure* or * *going out*, and that it was one of

* Εξόδου. Usitatum fuisse hoc genus loquendi Hellenistis, ab aliis abunde ostensum est. Sed et apud Latinos *exitus* et *excessus* pro morte passim occurrunt. Potest hæc locutio iis annumerari, quæ vetustissimam de animarum immortalitate traditionem consignant, cujus generis aliquot observatæ sunt a Tertulliano.—*Grotius* ad *Luc.* ix. 31.

Many examples are collected by Wetstein, in his notes on this verse, and by Whitby.

Matt. ix. 24.—ἀλλὰ καθεύδου, *dormis*. Κατάραθιν εὐδαίμων, inquit Menander de mortuo. Hæ autem locutiones, ut et quod mortuos μακάρους aut μακαρίτας vocabant, et quod Tertullianus apud Romanos antiquitus usurpatum scribit, *Abiit, et reverti debet*, vestigia esse videntur antiquissimæ traditionis opposita Sadducæis, quorum sententiæ favisse videtur Jairi domus. *Grotius*.

Tertullian (cited here by Grotius) who catches at any thing that seems to make for his purpose, urges this argument in his book *De Testimon. Animæ*, p. 83. *Si de aliquo jam pridem defuncto, tanquam de*

of those expressions by which the old tradition of the soul's immortality was preserved. The same hath been observed of the phrases used in the Old Testament, of men being gathered to their fathers; and it hath also been remarked, that this expression is not used * in Scripture of wicked men, but of those who lived and died in the favour of God.

“ These expressions, whatsoever sense might be affixed to them in after-times, seem to have arisen at first from an opinion that the souls of the deceased repaired to certain mansions, that every nation and every family had their separate districts in that great world of the dead, and that they who departed hence went to dwell with their own ancestors. Lucian, in the *Necyomantia*, feigning that he entered into the Acherusian Plain, says, *There we found the Demi-gods, and the Heroines, and multitudes of the dead, divided according to their nations and*

vivo, quis requirat, præ manu occurrit dicere, Abiit jam, et reverti debet, &c.

The common saying, I suppose, amongst the Romans, on this occasion, was only *Abiit*; and what follows, *et reverti debet*, is Terentian's own inference.

Jos. Scaliger says; *Abiit* dicebant Antiqui, pro, *mortuus est*, non quod sperarent immortalitatem, sed ob euphoniā. Scaligerana. But why might it not be for both these reasons?

* Peters *Dissert.* on *Job*, p. 326.

tribes.

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tribes. And indeed they who believe that their better part is immortal, have a strong desire impressed upon their minds to visit their friends and relations, and those illustrious persons whose memory is held in veneration. If Socrates might have had his choice, he would have joined himself to the shades of the ancient Greeks, he who rejoiced to think that he should perhaps converse with the souls of Orpheus, Hesiod, Musæus, and Homer, and of those Heroes who had been men of probity and virtue. Ezechiel * seems to allude to this opinion, when he says, *Ashur is there, and all her company, &c.* Le Clerc †.

“ The word *Scheol* signifies properly and usually, || *the lowest and innermost parts of the earth*; and this figurative description in § Isaiah, dressed in poetic ornaments, is built upon an hypothesis received in those days, that the souls of men separated from the body went to a vast subterraneous region, the common receptacle of the deceased, divided into various mansions, according to the dispositions and qualities of the persons who were to inhabit them; that these ghosts still retained the sha-

* C. xxxiii. 22. † On *Genes.* xv. 15. || Τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς.
§ C. xiv. 9.

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dow and appearance of themselves and of the character and station in which they had acted upon earth. This region of the dead was called by the Hebrews *Scheol*, by the Greeks *ᾍδης*, by the Latins *Inferi* [by us, in old English, *Hell*]; and at the entrance of this region or city there were gates; whence Isaiah mentions the gates of hell. This system was received amongst the vulgar Jews, as it appears from the story of Samuel's ghost raised by the Sorcerers from below, and appearing in his usual form and habit. Judicious readers will discern, that either Saul was deluded by the woman, or the woman by Satan; but hence we may collect what was the common opinion concerning the state of the dead.

From this system, which in part must have been very ancient, were taken some expressions of holy men concerning the condition of the deceased; as when Jacob, thinking that Joseph was slain *, said, *I will go down to the grave to my son*. And the Psalmist †; *Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave*. And; *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*. And; *The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence*.

* *Genes. c. xxxvii. 35.*

† *Psalms xxx. 3. xvi. 10. cxv. 17. xciv. 17.*

And;

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And; *My soul had almost dwelt in silence.*
 These holy men, by *Scheol*, understood the receptacle of souls separated from the body, whom they accounted immortal, and not deprived of sense.

The same system was embraced by all civilized nations, but at last was mixed with fables, principally by the poets, who with their fictions corrupted the remains of the ancient Theology. I am persuaded that the Greeks received it from the *Ægyptians*, whose doctrine of *Hades* is expounded by Herodotus, in his account of king Rhampsinitus, whom the *Ægyptians* reported to have visited the regions of the dead, and to have returned back alive; as the Greeks also have feigned concerning their heroes. Homer, adopting this hypothesis, introduced it often in his poems, and was followed by others, but took it himself from Orpheus, as Diodorus Siculus observes. Plato, having in some measure purged it from poetical figments, inserted it in his philosophical system, and hence not only the poets, but other learned and wise writers, both Greek and Latin, borrowed their sentiments and expressions, when they had occasion to speak of the state of the dead, &c.

Although

Although the New Covenant contains a more express revelation of eternal life than the ancient Dispensation, yet certain it is that this doctrine, even in those times, was delivered and inculcated in the Schools of the Prophets, as it appears most plainly from some of the Hymns and Psalms, which were composed upon this very subject, not to insist at present upon other proofs, &c." *Vitringa* *.

In the Greek Translation of the book of Job, the last verse runs thus; *So Job died, being old and full of days; but it is written, that he shall rise again with those whom the Lord raiseth up.*

It appears also from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and from some other ancient Jewish writers, that it was a prevailing opinion at all times amongst the Jews, that God's promises to them of temporal blessings were to be understood in an higher sense, and that the land of Canaan was a type of the kingdom of heaven, and the promise of living in it for ever was a representation of future happiness in the life to come.

* On *Isaiab* xiv. 9. xxxviii. 10, 11.

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We may observe also that God, though he dispensed national rewards and punishments to the Jews according to their national behaviour virtuous or vicious, yet, with relation to particular persons, often suffered one event to befall the righteous and the wicked; and good men to endure all kind of evil in this life, to shew that his promises to the obedient were not confined to temporal blessings, and should be made good hereafter.

To which we must add, that all the prophets, who were raised up from time to time to instruct and reprove the people, assured them, that God would not fail to make a proper difference between those who served him, and those who served him not; whence it seemed reasonable to conclude, that when it was not made in this life, it would be made in another.

It is farther to be noted, that ancient * Pagan authors assure us, that the Jews believed the soul's immortality; and it is certain, that in our Saviour's time the Pharisees, with the generality of the people, believed the resurrection of the dead, though they had wrong notions † about it.

* Grotius on *Matt. v. 20. xiv. 2.*

† Le Clerc, *Hist. Eccl. Proleg. i. 2.*

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To these hopes which the persons, of whom we have been speaking, entertained of another life, as well as to the dictates of reason, is to be ascribed the opinion of one supreme God, and of a future state, which was diffused through the world in all ages, and was found in all nations, though corrupted with many fictions, and rejected by half-philosophers, and ignorant atheists,

If we suppose the Jews to have had no expectation of another life, we must confess that hard was the condition of good men in those ages. Take away the prospect of futurity, though it may be granted that the nature of virtue and vice would remain the same, yet the most prevailing motive to virtue, to the love and the fear of God, the best solution of the present disorders which he permits, and the best support and comfort under the evils of life, would be taken away. It seems therefore unreasonable to suppose holy and inspired persons, patriarchs, and prophets, and martyrs, to have had no views beyond this short and uncertain and calamitous life, for such it was to many of them.

The notion that the Jews ever lived under an equal providence extended to each individual,

dual, is not conceivable, because the happiness of man in this life depends not intirely upon his own condition and behaviour, but upon that of others also.

This world hath ever been a state of disorder, in which good and evil are promiscuously distributed ; and many have been exercised with heavy and lasting afflictions, especially in times of wickedness and distress. Such was the condition of the Jews, as well as of other people. Several persons are occasionally mentioned, whose life seemed to have been a burden to them, and who might have been glad of a release ; and to them, without question, multitudes might have been added who are not recorded in history. But we find not that they took the obvious method of dispatching themselves ; a method in behalf of which, if there were no future state, many and very plausible things may be said. Life indeed is the gift of God, but it is given as a favour ; and if it become an insupportable evil, why should not a man return it back again to the donor ? This is said upon a supposition that the soul and body perish together ; for if there be a life to come, the present state is a state of trial, a school of discipline, and a passage to immortality ;

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talitv ; and then out of reverence to our Creator, of faith and trust in his wisdom and goodness, and for the sake of setting a proper example of resignation and patience; and in humble hopes that he will remove us to a better condition, we ought to wait our appointed time, till he call us hence, and set us free.

Job in all his calamities, and when he was most dejected and nearest to despair, never talks of laying hands upon himself, nor do his wrangling friends hint such an advice to him, which is an argument that he and they thought it unlawful, and consequently, that they entertained the belief of another state.

The strain of piety and devotion which discovers itself in the books of the Old Testament, and distinguishes them so eminently from all ancient Pagan compositions, is a proof, and indeed a most convincing proof, to me at least, that the Authors entertained hopes beyond the present state and scene of things.

The sacred Writers had as deep a sense of the emptiness of human enjoyments, and of the vanity of the present transitory world, as any Pagan authors, and have described it with as much energy and eloquence. They observe that human life is a mere dream, a fleeting shadow,

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shadow, a sickly flower that blooms and fades in a day ; that, short as it is, it is liable to be made shorter by many unforeseen accidents, and that it is attended with a sad variety of sorrows and disappointments. And yet the same writings overflow with the warmest sentiments of piety, represent God as the Father and Friend of the righteous, whose favour and loving kindness is better than all worldly blessings, better than life itself ; to whom is due, not only the profoundest veneration, but the sincerest love ; who is the object of faith and trust and reliance, and to obey whom is the truest wisdom. A language by no means suitable to the doctrine of the soul's mortality, and which could only proceed from the lips, but never from the heart of one who had no hopes beyond the grave ! If our days be short, and exposed to many evils, and death closes up the poor transitory scene, the consequence would be irresistible, that life is a trifle hardly worth the accepting, and that the condition of man was in some measure and in some respects worse than that of the beasts ; for these have no thoughts of things to come, and enjoy the present without any hopes and fears ; but man is plagued with desires of immortality, desires which

which should not dwell in a creature made only for a few days. Where then would be the motive for gratitude, trust, piety, and devotion? He to whom so little had been given, could love but little. What should inflame his affections, and excite in him such lively sentiments of the immense kindness and goodness of God? who ever heard of such a thing as a devout Epicurean? The thought of perishing soon, and of being struck out of the list of God's creatures, would cast a damp as cold as death upon all his attempts towards devotion; and the nearer he drew to his fatal end, the less regard he would have for his Creator. All that he could do would be to arm himself with stubborn resolution, and endeavour to resign with a good grace what would be soon taken from him; but zeal for the honour and glory of God, a religious sorrow for his offences, a desire to please his Maker, pious love and devout supplication, these affections could never take up their abode in his breast.

In the history of the Kings of Israel and Judah we find that righteous persons were imprisoned, banished, persecuted, slain by wicked and idolatrous rulers. They suffered for their religion, and for the cause of God, and were

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Confessors or Martyrs; and, without question, if they would have apostatized, or complied with the unjust commands of the governors and the majority, and violated the laws of God, they might have escaped such cruel usage. This is another proof of a future state, without the prospect of which there can be no great motive to endure such sufferings. The divine Providence was particularly concerned either to deliver those just persons from the hands of the ungodly, or to make them a compensation in some other way; and since God did not perform the first, they had reason to expect the latter, and to hope for things not seen.

It is certain that God will reward and punish men here or hereafter in a due proportion to their conduct.

Now an equal and impartial Providence, as we observed before, never presided over the Jews personally and invariably, but only generally and nationally. A proper difference was not made between men suitably to their behaviour, and some offences were punished by God himself in a manner which must be thought very severe, if there were no future state. Lot's wife looked back, contrary to

the Angel's direction, and lost her life for it. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, for offering incense in an improper manner, that is, for a transgression that was not malicious and deliberate, were killed by a fire which came out from the Lord. Uzzah, because he inadvertently touched the ark, perished in a moment; God smote him for his error, and he died. The inhabitants of Bethshemeth, with bold curiosity, looked into the Ark, and God punished several of them with sudden death. The Prophet, who was imposed upon and deluded by the old Prophet at Bethel, was slain by a lion. The children who reviled the Prophet Elisha were torn to pieces by wild beasts. They were probably the children of idolatrous parents; but they were children who perhaps hardly knew what they did. David committed greater crimes than these; but God forgave him, and accepted his repentance. Jonathan, a promising youth, and Josiah, one of the best kings of Judah, came to an untimely end, and fell in battle. The sons of Eli, profligate and detestable men, suffered no heavier punishment; they died in war. Jeremiah and other Prophets, and good men lived in calamitous times, and passed their days in anxiety and trouble.

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trouble. Manasseh, who filled the land with innocent blood, lived to repent, and reigned long, and died old and in peace.

Upon the supposition of a future state, it is easy to justify these proceedings; but if death put an end to our being, there is something altogether unaccountable in this scheme of Providence.

Princes and Prophets, it hath been said, must sometimes suffer for the iniquity of the people, and children for the sins of their parents. Be it so: another life clears up all these irregularities and difficulties; but nothing else can. It is no satisfactory answer to one who endeavours sincerely and diligently to serve God, that the public utility and the honour of the divine laws require his afflictions, his misery, and his destruction, whilst worthless men live and prosper, or, at least, fare no worse than he.

God will judge the world in righteousness, and all men must appear before him, and give an account of themselves. This is the doctrine of the New Testament; but hence it follows that all men, either by reason or by revelation, might have known this important truth, or at least might have looked upon a life to

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come as probable. We may say then, either wicked Jews in all ages could discover the reasonableness of a time of judgment and retribution, or they could not. If they could not, it seems hard that they should undergo penalties to which they could not foresee themselves obnoxious: if they could, we cannot suppose that those great truths were hidden from wise and good men, which even the stupid and the wicked, by a right use of their understanding, were capable of discovering.

Again: If Abraham and the Patriarchs, and Moses and Joshua, if Samuel and David, if pious Kings and Prophets believed another life, which is generally acknowledged, the consequence is unavoidable, that it must have been the common opinion amongst the Hebrews. Did not these great and good men teach it to their own wives and children and domestics? or had they no interest at home, and no influence over their dependents? or was this important doctrine communicated to a few chosen persons, like an Egyptian mystery, under the seal of eternal secrecy? or was it of such an ugly and uncomfortable nature, that none could be brought to entertain it? or were the Hebrews so very different from all the rest of mankind,

mankind, that neither the innate love of immortality, nor respect for their parents and rulers, nor even the vanity of imitating illustrious men, which must always be a genteel and fashionable thing, could have any effect upon them?

There are, besides the proofs which we have given, several texts in the Old Testament, which may indeed be thought capable of another and a lower sense; and yet, without any violence done to the words, may as justly at least be supposed to contain intimations of a future state. Some of them I shall examine; for to produce them all would be an endless task.

David * says,

In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

We will consider what these words can mean, if they relate not to the kingdom of heaven. They can mean no more than this; It is a great pleasure to me, and to all good men, to dwell at Jerusalem, where thy Ark, O God, is placed, and where thou art daily worshipped with sacrifices, prayers, and hymns. In attending at thy house, I enjoy that unspeak-

* Psalm xvi.

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able delight which thou conferrest upon those who love and honour thee.

Upon the supposition that these words were spoken by one who expected no future state, we must needs say that he hath strangely magnified a small matter, and dressed it up in most lofty terms. To dwell a few years, or days, in Mount Sion, to visit the Tabernacle constantly, to be well skilled in a Law calculated in some measure for a stubborn and perverse people, for children in understanding and rebels in disposition, is represented as happiness without measure and without end.

If they are the words of a pious Israelite who expected another life, these objections will indeed fall to nothing; and it must be owned, that such a man might justly speak in this strong and lively manner of the pleasure of worshipping God in the Tabernacle, as it was the way to happiness in this world and in the next. But then the point is gained, namely, that he entertained hopes of living hereafter with God.

Yet though these words, in the mouth of one who had views beyond the present world, may be interpreted, as we said before, of the satisfaction which he found in serving God

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after the manner which God required; they may perhaps relate to heaven, and perhaps better to heaven than to the Tabernacle, which was only a faint representation of that throne and that kingdom of God, where the holy Angels attend, and where they, with all righteous persons, shall indeed find fulness of joy, and pleasures for ever, greater and more valuable than these or any words can express.

David * says,

As for man, his days are as grass: as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.

“ Here David, first, declares the vanity and shortness of this life, and of all its enjoyments; and, secondly, the everlasting mercy of God to the Faithful in the other life. For the everlasting mercy of God, here spoken of, being opposed to the short, transitory enjoyments of the present life, must necessarily signify the mercy and goodness of God to the faithful in the other life, which is indeed the only everlasting mercy. Hence Jewish Doctors saw and acknow-

* Psalm ciii.

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ledged that this text speaks of the everlasting happiness of the righteous in the life to come. And the Chaldee Paraphrast thus renders the latter part of the text ; *But the mercy of the Lord is in this world, and even in the world to come, upon them that fear him.*" Bull *.

In the book of Job, we find that good man sometimes overcome by his afflictions, and despairing to see an end of them. At other times he gets the better of his doubts, and expresses a firm hope and confidence in God. *Though he slay me,* says he, *yet will I trust in him.* And again, *Oh that thou wouldst bid me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me !* Which words seem to contain a supposition that God might shew favour to the dead, as well as to the living. And again ; *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

It hath been commonly supposed that Job here declares his belief of a resurrection at the

* Vol. I. Serm. viii. where he undertakes to prove, from many passages of Scripture, that life everlasting was expected by good men under the Old Testament.

last day : some think that he speaks of a temporal deliverance. The former of these opinions seems to be the more probable ; but even according to the latter, the meaning of the words will amount to thus much ; I know that God lives for ever, and I firmly believe that he will deliver me out of all my calamities. Let what will befall me more, if it be possible, than what I already suffer ; let me be given up into the hands of wicked men ; let them strip my skin from my body, and pierce me through, yet I am confident that God will again raise me to a flourishing and happy state. Even according to this interpretation, a persuasion is contained in the words, that God could raise the dead to life, and that he would do it, rather than suffer afflicted integrity to lose its reward. And thus the faith of Job was like the faith of Abraham, and he believed that God could raise the dead, though he had never seen or heard an example of it.

It is to be particularly observed, that Job's calamities, all circumstances taken together, are represented as preternatural, and that the hand of God was manifest in them. Therefore his friends concluded that he must have been a great sinner, and an artful hypocrite, to bring
down

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down such extraordinary judgments upon himself; and the doctrine of a future state would by no means have cleared up the difficulty, and settled the dispute between him and them. God says to Job, *Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?*

That is, perhaps, Knowest thou where the soul resides after death? and what is the condition of the righteous and the wicked, when they are gone hence? Without knowing this, how canst thou judge of the ways of Providence? This seems to be the most probable sense of the question.

In Deuteronomy God says, *See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me. I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal.* The same expression is found in the first book of Samuel; *The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.*

These words may be thus explained; God, whose justice, power, and goodness are perfect, reduceth * either particular persons, or whole

* In this sense Hesiod saith,

Ἦῃα μὲν γὰρ βεῖαι, εἴα δὲ βριάσθαι χαλεπῆι.

Ἦῃα δ' ἀπὸ πλοῦτος μινύσθαι, καὶ πῶλον αἰετῇ.

Ἦῃα δὲ τ' ἰδόναι σκολιόν, καὶ ἀγνόονα κάρῃ.

Ζεὺς ὡς βεβήκειν, καὶ ἐνέγκειν δαίμονα καλόν.

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nations, to the lowest state of adversity, for the punishment of their sins, or for a trial of their virtue; and, when he sees it proper, can exalt them again. But they may as justly, I think, be interpreted in a literal manner; Nothing is too hard for God; he can kill, and he can restore to a second life. An ancient Jew, commonly supposed to be Josephus, who wrote a book concerning the Maccabees, introduces the mother of the Seven Sons who suffered martyrdom, encouraging them with these, amongst other words of the Scriptures; *I kill, and I make alive.*

The book of Ecclesiastes is obscure in many places; but the Author useth some expressions which seem to favour the opinion of the soul's immortality; as when he says, speaking of death; *Then shall the dust return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.*

He declares more than once, that All is vanity and vexation of spirit; from which uncomfortable observation, joined to some things which he says in other places, the doctrine of a future state seems so naturally to follow, that it is strange if he saw not a consequence so obvious.

Rejoice,

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Rejoice, says he, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. And again; I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked. And again; God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

The question is, what Solomon means by this judgment of God, whether it be that God will in this world make a difference between the righteous and the wicked, or whether he speaks of a future judgment?

If we take these passages by themselves, there is perhaps no reason to extend them farther than this, that God will in the present world deal with men according to their deserts; but if we compare them with many things which are said in the same book, we shall find it not improbable that they relate to a future judgment as well as to a judgment in this life.

Solomon observes, that the scene of human affairs affords only a melancholy prospect; that true happiness is not to be obtained here below, and that he who expects any thing like it will find himself sadly deceived; that this life, con-

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sidered from first to last, hath nothing to make us fond of it. All is vanity and vexation of spirit.

To this general assertion it might be replied, that a good man, one who loves and fears God, must needs be happy. But, according to Solomon, religion itself will not constantly secure to us this desirable blessing ;

Because the evils and disappointments often exceed the good things and the pleasures of life;

Because events fall out to men, neither according to their abilities, nor according to their deserts, but indifferently, as time and chance determine ;

Because piety is sometimes joined to adversity, and sometimes is the very cause of a good man's sufferings.

Now if we compare this with the declarations in the same book, that God shall bring every work into judgment, we shall not find a way to reconcile these things without recourse to a future state.

Besides ; notwithstanding the cross events which the unconstant course of the world produceth, Solomon pronounces that it is true wisdom and a man's interest to be good, to fear God, and to keep his commandments ; which assertions also seem not to agree well together, unless

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unless we suppose a life after this, and in it a reward for the obedient. These things may well incline us to think, that when Solomon said, that God would bring every work into judgment, his meaning was, that God would do it either in this world, or in another: in favour of which opinion this may be added, that St. Paul, speaking of the day of judgment, says; *God shall judge the secrets of men, shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts—we must appear before Christ—that every one may receive—according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* These words seem copied from Ecclesiastes; *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Which affords room to conjecture that the Apostle might think the words of Solomon not restrained to a temporal judgment, but capable of an higher sense.

Isaiah says*; *He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.*

This may relate to a deliverance of the Church and the servants of God from persecution, and to happier days when insolent tyrants

should put no more of them to death. In a more exalted and a fuller sense, it may be extended to a resurrection to life eternal; and so St. Paul applies it, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians *.

Isaiah says †; *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die.* The Chaldee Paraphrast; *till you die the second death*; which though it seems not a right interpretation, yet shews the Translator's sense of a future state, who introduceth this doctrine upon all occasions, and who is thought by some to have lived at the beginning of the second century, and by others, earlier.

Isaiah says ‡; *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.*

Observe that the death of the righteous is here represented, not as an evil, but as a favour §; and

* 1 Cor. xv. 54. † C. xxii. 14. ‡ C. lvii. 1.

§ Some perhaps will reply, that it is better not to be, than to be in anxiety and pain.

—Tuque, O sanctissima conjux,

Felix morte tua, neque in hunc servata dolorem!

says old Evander, at the death of his son. A poor recompense this, and a slender comfort for the servants of God!

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that if the peace into which they enter is a state of eternal insensibility, the wicked enjoy it no less than they, nor is here any thing said to the advantage of piety. This seems to be a very strong argument for our purpose.

Again, Isaiah says; *Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

These words are interpreted by the Jewish Doctors of a real resurrection. They may contain a prophecy that the Jews should experience the greatest calamities, and be brought to the utmost distress, and afterwards should be delivered from all these evils, and restored to temporal prosperity. But particular notice should be taken, that the expressions denoting these calamities and these deliverances are all expressions which, literally interpreted, mean a real death, and a real resurrection from the dead, and seem to have been used by the Spirit of God on purpose to raise in the minds of good men a hope and a belief that they who suffered for the sake of God and of religion should be amply rewarded for their constancy, and raised up to a state of bliss and glory by the almighty power

power of God. For this reason, I say, the Prophets were influenced by the divine Spirit to choose this sublime and majestic language, and to represent God's power and goodness in terms which might lead righteous persons to expect that these promises would be accomplished in an extraordinary manner, a manner worthy of God, and not poorly confined to things temporal and transitory; for indeed if there were no future state, the prosperity of a few years upon this earth of ours is so very a trifle, such a shadow of nothing, such a vanity of vanities, that it would ill deserve the grandeur and magnificence of style which the sacred Writers must be supposed to have lavished upon it. *What is man, says David, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.* If man hath an immortal soul, he is indeed made only a little lower than the Angels, and is a younger brother of the same family. But if his dwelling be here below for a few years, and then he becomes an eternal Nothing, he may rather be said to be higher, and very little higher than the brutes.

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The same observations which have been made on Isaiah, that many of his prophecies contain fair intimations of a future state, may be made on these words of Daniel * ; *Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt ; and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever : and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.*

And on these words of Ezechiel † ; *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and set me down in the midst of a valley which was full of bones.— And I prophesied as I was commanded : and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone : and the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.*

And on these words of Hosea ‡ ; *Come and let us return unto the Lord ; for he hath torn, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, and we shall live in his sight.*

* C. xii. 2.

† C. xxxvii.

‡ C. vi.

In the New Testament, where mention is made of a future state, of a resurrection, of the day of judgment, the expressions are sometimes borrowed from the Old Testament. For example, the words of our Saviour, *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*, are taken partly from Daniel; which is another intimation that those prophecies might extend farther than to temporal blessings, and were capable of a sublimer sense.

The Jews who lived in the time of Ezechiel, and were in captivity, and lay under the many inconveniences which attend such a state, were willing to charge them to God and to their ancestors, rather than to themselves, and frequently used this proverb, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*; as if they suffered for faults which they had not committed. But God assures them by the Prophet, that he would deal with them, without any respect to the actions of their ancestors, according to their own behaviour.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the

wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in it, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; he shall surely live, he shall not die. Therefore cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live.

These promises and threatenings seem indeed chiefly relating to temporal life and death; but not intirely, not absolutely, and without any regard to future rewards and punishments. For if there were no life besides this, it would be, I will not say difficult, but impossible to reconcile the unequal dispensations of providence with God's justice and goodness, either as discoverable by reason, or as magnificently described in the books of the Old Testament. If a future state be set aside, we might at least expect from a just, a kind and wise Providence, that men should receive in this life according

to their works in a proportion tolerably exact. But can we think that from the Babylonian captivity, to the coming of our Saviour, no pious Jew suffered for righteousness sake, and no wicked man, no apostate in that nation, met with as few losses and troubles as several who were far better than he? It cannot be imagined: and therefore if we would justify this solemn appeal which God makes by his prophet to the children of men, concerning the righteousness of his equal and impartial ways, we must suppose that the life and the death, which are there mentioned, relate, if chiefly to the present, yet not solely, nor so as to exclude that second life and death which were afterwards more fully revealed.

When our Saviour came into the world, he found the Jews settled in the opinion of a future state. He often introduced this doctrine in his discourses, but always as a truth known and acknowledged, not as a new discovery; nor did they, as upon other occasions, contradict or question it, the Sadducees excepted; and them he reprimanded, as persons who erred, not knowing the Scriptures, and gave them a proof of another life, from the books

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of Moses, where God is called, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Our Saviour's argument, in the opinion of several, seems rather directly to prove a future state, or another life, or the permanency of the soul, than a resurrection by which a dead man shall become a living man again. But as the Sadducees, who denied a resurrection, denied also that the soul was a living principle distinct from the body, our Lord, say they, by proving the permanency of the soul, or of the person, overset the foundation of their pernicious doctrine: But it seems most probable that our Saviour intended to convince the Sadducees of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; and it was a good argument *ad hominem*.

Abraham, in your opinion, is dead and perished; but God calls himself the God, that is, the protector and rewarder of Abraham, after he was dead; therefore he will raise him again to a state of happiness.

What could a Sadducee have replied to this? He could not say that God might reward the soul of Abraham, without raising him from the dead. By saying so, he must have given up his own system.

This

This argument of our Saviour, though it will not prove an intermediate state of happiness, yet on the other hand will not prove the sleep, or insensibility, or non-existence of the soul during that interval.

Here observe, that a living state of the same person, after this and besides this present state, may justly be called a resurrection, and is as much as the word *resurrection*, *ἀνάστασις*, considered in itself, ever implies. They therefore who in the text above-mentioned look for a proof of the rising of that body which died, are seeking what they will not find.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead contains undoubtedly thus much, that a dead man shall be a living man again, and the same person that he was before; and this sufficeth for moral and practical purposes. All beyond this is of the speculative and metaphysical kind, in which religion seems not to be concerned.

In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham says; *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.* And again; *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one arose from the dead.* Which, to say the least of it, is an intimation that the Jews might and ought to have inferred

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a future state of retribution from the writings of Moses and the Prophets.

The sum of the things which have been said is this: The doctrine of a future state of retribution seems not to be promulgated in the Old Testament, nor made a sanction of the Mosaic Law, nor taught directly and fully. But it is implied and supposed throughout, and may be proved by inferences justly drawn, and strictly conclusive. And hence it came to pass that the Jews were divided in the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The former admitted the doctrine of a future state, as deducible from many passages in the sacred books; the Sadducees rejected it, because they could not find any texts that absolutely required a belief of it. But in the Gospel it is so plainly affirmed, that Christians, divided in other points, have agreed in expecting another life.

In the Old Testament, the dead are indeed often described as lying in a state of insensibility; and in the New Testament also, as being asleep. But in these passages of Scripture, the state of the soul, as many learned men have justly observed, is out of the question; death is considered purely in opposition to this life upon earth; and a body, when the spirit hath left

left it, in opposition to a living body. A dead man, or his lifeless body, goes into the grave, into the house of darkness, sleep, silence, and oblivion, and can neither praise God, nor see the sun, nor converse with men, nor have any intercourse with this world.

Thus Homer, as it is well known, supposeth the shades of the dead to live and to act in Hades; and yet he sometimes represents death as a state of * insensibility; and Sarpedon, falling in battle, is delivered to † *Death* and to *Sleep*, who carry him to his grave.

It is ‡ said of Rachel's dead children, *they are not*.

“ Accordingly, though the Jews then undoubtedly had embraced the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, yet saith the Son of Sirac §; *Praise perisheth from the dead, as*

* Ὁ δὲ μὴ αἰθεὶς πνεῦμα χαλκίος ὕπνῳ, Π. Α. 241.

Which Virgil hath thus rendered; *Æn. x. 745.*

Olli dura quies oculos, et ferreus urget

Somnus; in æternam clauduntur lumina noctem.

Homerus ὕπνῳ χαλκίος vocat, quod ad duritiem referre videtur Virgilius, Πρὸς τὴν ἀναισθησίαν sensusque amissionem Plutarchus: Πάλιν τί ποτε φησὶ τὸν Δανάην εἶναι χαλκίος ὕπνῳ, τὴν ἀναισθησίαν ἡμῶς διδάξαι σιγήμην. *Constantin. Lexic.*

† Πέμπει μιν Θάνατος τε φέρειν, καὶ γόδμοι ὕπνον. Π. Π. 454.

‡ Jerem. xxi. 15. Matt. ii. 18.

§ C. xvii. 28.

not

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* not being. And in that very chapter in which Josephus asserts the perpetual duration of the soul, he saith, *We have received from God our being, and to him we render again our † not being: that is, as the context shows, we return that soul which he gave us.* *Whitby §.*

If a persuasion that God is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently serve him, may justly be required from every man that cometh into the world, from the Patriarch before the Law, from the Hebrew under the Law, and from the Gentile, who, having no written Law, is a Law to himself; if this may be called the great Creed of Nature and of Reason, much more is it required of us who enjoy the additional light of the Gospel, and amongst whom the knowledge of the works of God, of morality, of natural and revealed religion, hath been greatly improved.

But then, proportionable to the advantages which we possess, is the danger of abusing them. A course of vicious actions will at length bring upon a sinner even in this life one of these two evils; it will either lead him to question or disbelieve God's providence and a

* *ἡ ψυχή αἰώνιον, ὡς ποιεῖ ὁ Θεός.*

† *καὶ τὸ μὴ εἶναι ὡς ἡμεῖς ἐκείνῳ δίδωμεν.* *Bell. Jud. iii. 25.*

§ On Matt. ii. 18.

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future state, and to entertain the miserable expectation of perishing like a brute; or if he cannot shake off his faith, it will reduce him to the wretched condition of believing future happiness without any hopes of enjoying it, and future punishment without any hopes of escaping it.

II. The second thing which the words of the text suggest to our consideration is this:

We ought, in imitation of those holy persons recorded in sacred history, to account ourselves strangers and sojourners on earth, and to entertain dispositions suitable to such a persuasion. *These all died in faith, — and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

Whosoever declareth himself a stranger, says the Author of this Epistle, declareth that he hath an home; for a stranger is one who is absent from home. When therefore the Patriarchs confess themselves strangers in the land of promise, strangers and sojourners on the earth, they intimate, that they have a country in which they hope to settle; and what place can that be but heaven? *They that say such things declare plainly, that they seek a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, since he hath prepared for them a city.*

Good

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Good men in the Old Testament, and Christians in the New, are represented as strangers and sojourners in a foreign country. Christians are said not to be of this world, to have no continuing city here, but to seek one to come; to have their conversation, that is, their citizenship in heaven, to be members of the heavenly society; and they are exhorted to pass the time of their sojourning in pious fear.

The religion which we profess bids us look upon ourselves as strangers here below. We are, or we should be, the servants of Christ. His kingdom is not of this world: he hath promised us no honours and certain possessions here; he reigns with his Father, and hath told us, that where he is, there shall we be also. Whilst we are here, we are absent from our Master, from our home, from those abodes where only we have a promise to find rest and happiness.

The inference is obvious, that since we are strangers and sojourners for a few days in a world for the most part unkind and deceitful to its worthiest inhabitants, where sin and folly and trouble abound, and since we have the prospect of a better country, to which, if it be

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not our own fault, we shall have access, we ought to entertain inclinations and views suitable to our condition, and so use the present as to secure the future; that is, in few words, we ought to live virtuously and religiously, not too much dejected under disappointments and afflictions, nor proud and overpleased at temporal advantages; ready to resign with decency and good temper what else we must resign unwillingly, and not dependent upon those things on which our eternal happiness depends not.

The disciples of Epicurus, who had no hopes beyond the present life, have considered mankind as guests or strangers, who are invited by Nature to an entertainment, and who, when they have partaken of the feast, ought, instead of repining and murmuring because they are dismissed, to * retire with a good grace, and with thankful acknowledgments of the favours which they have received; to retire contentedly to their *home*, to the grave, called the *Everlasting House* † in many Inscriptions, and in the language of those who expected no future state.

Socrates, and those wiser Gentiles who followed the sentiments of that great man, con-

* Cur non, ut vitæ plenus conviva, recedis?

† Domus Æterna.

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essed themselves to be strangers and sojourners here below, and entertained hopes of going to their *home*, by which they meant, not the grave, but happy mansions prepared for the spirits of just men.

Strangers and pilgrims we are in this world, not only as we are Christians, but as we are men. We want not the light of revelation to lead us to the discovery of this truth; we must be acquainted with it, we cannot shut out its irresistible evidence. Forget it we may for a season, and put off the thoughts of it; but they will force themselves upon the mind at certain times, and many occasions will oblige us to remember that we must go hence, and part with all that we love so immoderately.

It is in our power to set our hearts upon earthly things, and make them so necessary to us as not to be able to enjoy any quiet without them. It is in our power to employ all our days and our industry in labouring to acquire and to secure them; it is in our power to inflame our passions, and to weaken our reason, and to endear this world to us, and to make ourselves unwilling to leave it, and unfit to die. Thus far our power reacheth; but it cannot alter the stubborn nature of things, it cannot

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A FUTURE STATE. 351.

cannot fix those which are fleeting and delusive, nor stamp innocence upon those which are forbidden.

Nature and experience teach us, that we are strangers here below; and that though the things of this life are very unequally distributed amongst men, and the most deserving are commonly the worst accommodated, yet Death equals and levels all, and makes the difference between their condition appear almost insensible. This consideration alone might keep us from envying the Great, and from a slavish regard to earthly things: but it might still leave us dissatisfied with our state, and inclined to think that we might as well have never been called into being. Religion joins her testimony to our experience, in telling us, that we are strangers and sojourners here below; but then she tells us better things, and assures us, that we have a home, and peaceful abodes, where we shall dwell for ever.

Since then by the divine appointment, and the laws of nature, our continuance here is short, and our present possessions uncertain, the best course that we can take to pass those few days with comfort and satisfaction is, to remember the end for which we were made, to provide

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provide for the unchangeable state to which we are approaching, and to entertain moderate affections towards the things which we cannot call our own. He who acts thus, if we suppose him to have fewer pleasures than worldly-minded persons, which however is not true, yet hath undoubtedly fewer troubles and disappointments, and is better able to bear them when they come.

CHARGE

C H A R G E I.

MAY 3, 1765.

CHRISTIANITY the PRESERVER and
SUPPORTER of LITERATURE.

Εγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τῆ κοίτης.

My Reverend Brethren,

IT is obvious to observe how much Religion suffers from the fanatical spirit which prevails amongst the lower sort, and from the open profaneness and infidelity of persons whose education, station, and circumstances ought to have taught them better things, and to have made them grateful to God, and useful to the Public.

As to the former of these evils, fanaticism, that it produces many bad effects, is manifest; but where it is not joined with the spirit of impudence and detraction, and with a contempt of morality, one would willingly consider it and treat it rather as a disease than as a fault, and by no means so pernicious as infidelity, that Pestilence which walketh in this nation openly and at noon-day.

It is therefore our office and duty to vindicate the truth, reasonableness, and excellence of our Religion against the cavils of the Deist, and the misrepresentations of the Enthusiast. But setting Enthusiasm aside, I shall confine this Discourse to the defence of our cause against infidelity.

There is no nation wherein so many and so bold and undisguised and insolent attacks upon Christianity have appeared in the present and in the last century, as in this country of ours.

But it cannot hence be fairly inferred, that we abound more in Infidels than other Christian nations. It may be presumed, that there are more in France and Italy than here. But in Popish countries they are obliged to be upon the reserve, as to the publication of books: there is no insulting the established Religion

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in that gross manner; and the authority of the Magistrate, enforced by pains and penalties, lays some restraint upon profane persons in those regions; whilst, amongst us, men may *Curse God and prosper*. So that the laboured works of our Infidels are the fruits of that liberty of the press which here prevails in matters relating to religion. To put rigid restraints upon it, seems to be no good remedy. In this world such is the course of things, that evil often ariseth out of good, and good out of evil. The freedom of writing, though it will unavoidably degenerate into licentiousness, hath produced many useful effects. Truth is not afraid of being examined or opposed; the books of Deists and Atheists have perverted few, except those who were already more than half-spoilt without their assistance; and they have occasioned many excellent treatises in behalf of Religion, and have also taught the defenders of the gospel to reject the rubbish which prejudice, ignorance, and bigotry had super-added to the Christian religion, and whatsoever was not essential to it, to reduce it as nearly as possible to its primitive simplicity, to give up such interpretations of it as are indefensible.

and to pay no blind veneration to Fathers, and Councils, and Systems of Theology.

*Jam nihil, O superi, querimus; scelera ipsa
nefasque*

Hac mercede placent.

Amongst the objections which profane men have raised against the Gospel, are these, that it hath done much harm in the world, and that it hath done little good to compensate that evil.

In attempting to shew that Christianity hath been the cause of much evil, they have a large field to expatiate in, a copious subject for declamation. They observe, that as soon as the Church had peace without doors, she had war within, and began to oppress her own children for real or pretended heresies; that as soon as the Jews and Pagans could no longer persecute her, she began in her turn to persecute them; that from the fourth century, when she learned to shed blood, and to put the Priscillianists to death for erroneous opinions, all sorts of evils prevailed and increased, as uncharitable contentions, fines, banishments, imprisonments, superstition, Monkery, fanaticism, pious frauds, lying

lying miracles, idolatrous practices, Ecclesiastical usurpation and tyranny, Inquisitions, assassinations, rebellions, perjuries, breach of public faith, Croisades, impious wars waged upon pious pretences, and so forth.

A short answer will suffice for this accusation. We deny the charge. The facts objected, though exaggerated by our enemies, have in them for the most part more truth than we could wish. But what hath the Gospel to do with them? The Gospel teacheth and encourageth no such practices, but absolutely condemns them: the Gospel, as Ammianus Marcellinus, though a Pagan, honestly says of it, *Nil nisi justum suadet et lene*. The Christians who signalized themselves by their immoral deeds, particularly by cruel acts of persecution, were men whose behaviour was contrary to the religion which they professed, and many of them were nominal Christians and real Atheists; and the Christians who fell into gross superstition and fanaticism were men who understood not the nature of true religion, and many of whom were more than half mad.

But it hath been an old device with Infidels to confound religion with superstition. Lucre-

tius began the attack, and always calls superstition by the name of religion.

Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.

In this he hath been imitated by all his successors, down to these days; and our Hobbes hath assured us, that the only difference between religion and superstition is this, that religion is a superstition in fashion, and superstition is a religion out of fashion. Thus he, with some wit, much malice, and no truth.

The other objection which I intend to consider more fully is, that Christianity hath done little good in the world. If Christianity, say they, had been in reality what its votaries pretend, a divine revelation, established and supported by a series of preternatural operations, the same Providence which introduced it with such a vast *apparatus*, such a profusion of signs and wonders, would certainly have so ordered the course of things, that the salutary effects of it should have been proportionable to the means. But the contrary is evident, and the follies and vices of Christians, especially from the time that their religion was received by the Emperors, and by Law established, shew

shew that the whole System was a mere human contrivance, and that God had no share in it.

Here we may just observe, by the way, that the corruptions of the Christian world were foreseen and foretold by Christ and his Apostles, which shews at least thus much, that they were not mistaken, and did not expect that more benefit should arise from the Gospel than hath really been produced.

Nor indeed could it have had a greater influence upon the minds and manners of men, without such a method of divine government as would leave no liberty, no deliberating, choosing, and preferring; and, instead of exalting human nature, would depress it beneath its present condition.

But to come directly to the point in hand; whosoever shall carefully and candidly consider the case will be obliged to allow, that the Gospel, notwithstanding all the defects of Christians, hath produced much good in the world.

This subject I formerly endeavoured to clear up in some Discourses on the Christian Religion, in which I gave many instances to shew, that Christianity hath civilized several bar-

barous nations, abolished several cruel customs, suppressed polygamy and licentious divorces, and in a great measure slavery, mended the civil Laws, established Schools and Academies, improved the moral and religious notions even of those who did not receive it, as of the ancient Pagans, and of the Jews, and of the Mahometans,

Tantum Religio potuit suadere bonorum.

But there is one considerable benefit arising from it, which at that time I overlooked, and which I think deserved to be examined; and it is this, that all the useful learning which is now to be found in the world is in a great measure owing to the Gospel. If this can be made out, it should move every person who hath any love and esteem for literature, and who is, or pretends to be, skilled in it, to think and speak decently and respectfully, at least, of that Religion to which he is indebted for it,

I cannot recollect to have seen this point directly discussed by any ancient or modern writer. Indeed it came lately into my mind, whilst I was considering how I should address myself on this occasion to you, my Learned Brethren,

Brethren, and whilst I was seeking out some subject which might recommend *itself* to your favourable attention. I will therefore proceed in this inquiry, trusting in your candour, and persuaded that you will excuse defects in the performance, for the sake of the design.

The Keys of learning are the learned languages, and a grammatical and critical skill in them.

The reverence which the Jews had for their sacred books preserved those most ancient of all records, and along with them the knowledge of the Hebrew language. But the Christians, who had the same veneration for the Old Testament, have contributed more than the Jews themselves to secure and to explain those books, as they had indeed more advantages and greater helps. The Christians in ancient times collected and preserved the Greek versions of those Scriptures, particularly that of the Septuagint, and translated the originals into Latin. They preserved copies of the works of Josephus, which were little esteemed by the Jews, who substituted in his place a ridiculous Blockhead, called Josephus Ben Gorion, but which help to confirm and explain the sacred Books, and cast a light upon the Jewish history.

To

To Christians were due the old Hexapla; and in the later times Christians have published the Polyglotts, and the Samaritan Pentateuch: and the Christian Critics and Commentators, such as Capellus, Bochart, Grotius, Le Clerc, Vitranga, and many others, have beyond measure surpassed the Jewish Doctors in illustrating and defending the holy Scriptures.

It was the study of the Scriptures which excited Christians from early times to the study of Chronology, sacred and secular; and here much knowledge of History, and some skill in Astronomy were needful.

The New Testament, being written in Greek, caused Christians to apply themselves also to the study of that most copious and beautiful language.

Christianity at first, and for a considerable time, was violently opposed and assaulted by the Jews and Gentiles, and grievous were the sufferings of the primitive Christians. But this evil was compensated by many advantages: it was opposition which excited the Christians to justify their own cause, and to confute their adversaries, the Jewish Doctors, and the learned Gentiles; to expose the absurdities of Jewish Traditions, the weakness of Paganism, and the

the imperfections and insufficiency of Philosophy. For this purpose Jewish and Pagan literature were necessary, and what we call Philology, or Classical erudition. And thus the Christians became in learning superior to the Pagans; and, in point of style and composition, as good writers as they, both in Latin and in Greek.

The first Fathers, till the third century, were generally Greek writers. In this third century, the Latin language was much upon the decline; but the Christians preserved it from sinking into absolute barbarism; and of the Latin Fathers, in this and the following ages, it may be affirmed, that most of them wrote as well, at least, as their Pagan contemporaries, and some of them better; for this is a fair way of trying their abilities, and it is not reasonable to expect of them that they should equal Cæsar or Livy, Sallust or Cicero.

In the second and third century then, we have Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Arnobius, and Novatian, who may be opposed to the Latin Pagans of or after those times, and are not inferior to them, not to Apuleius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Symmachus, the Writers of the *Historia Augusta*, &c.

As

As to Minucius Felix, there is some affectation, and something of the African diction in his style; but there is something very lively, agreeable, and elegant in it, wherein he surpasseth any of the Pagans above-mentioned.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, we have Lactantius, a pure and elegant writer, who may justly be called *The Christian Cicero*; we have the Poets Prudentius, and Ausonius (if the latter may pass for more than a nominal Christian), and Ambrose, and Augustin, and the ingenious and learned Jerom, and Vincentius Lirinensis, and Eucherius, and Salvian, and Sidonius, and Sulpitius Severus, who are all good, or not bad writers, and the last of whom, Sulpitius Severus, hath a correctness and purity of style far beyond the age in which he lived.

About the middle of the sixth century we may date the extinction of Paganism in the Christian world, that is, of the Roman and Greek idolatry. In this age lived that excellent writer Boëthius, who might perhaps deserve a place even amongst Classic authors.

The Greek language was more durable, and suffered less corruption than the Latin, and the Greeks had pretty good writers down to the

the fifth century. Their empire, from its decline to its dissolution, ceased not to produce persons who applied themselves to the study of eloquence, of history, of philosophy, and of Theology. Amongst the Fathers are Justin Martyr, Clemens of Alexandria, Basil, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, the eloquent Chrysostom, Theodoret, Synesius, and others, whose style is by no means contemptible. To these must be added the most laborious and learned Origen, and Eusebius the father of Ecclesiastical History.

After the sixth century, ignorance, together with Superstition and Ecclesiastical tyranny, daily got ground till the Reformation. But however, even in these darker ages, there were not only pious and charitable, but studious and learned men to be found, men indeed of no inconsiderable erudition, considering the disadvantages under which they laboured; for these times were not altogether so deplorable as we usually imagine, and were neither quite deprived of knowledge or of virtue.

Such were Alcuin, an English Abbot, in the eighth century, Photius in the ninth, Bruno in the tenth, Lambertus in the eleventh, and many learned Greeks and Latins in the twelfth,

twelfth, and the following ages, as Eustathius of Thessalonica, Cinnamus, Glycas, Zonaras, Nicephorus Briennius, Anna Comnena, Anchialus, the elegant writer of the Life of the Emperor Henry the Fourth, William of Malmfbury, Abelard, remarkable for his singular abilities and unhappy fates, Saxo Grammaticus, Brunetto Latini, Roger Bacon, our unfortunate and persecuted countryman, and as great a genius perhaps as any age ever produced, Richard of Bury, Bishop of Durham, and Petrarch, to whom many more might be added. Nor were there wanting in those times Patrons of literature, and friends to merit, such as Alphonfus king of Spain, and Pope Nicholas the Fifth in the fifteenth century. No Protestant Scholar will refuse to pay his respects to the memory of this excellent Prelate. No man perhaps ever had so many books inscribed and dedicated to him. He enriched the Vatican Library with several volumes fetched from the remotest regions; he made large presents to the learned Philolphus, and promised him much greater rewards, if he would come to Rome, and translate Greek Classics into Latin. But the death of this worthy Pontiff put an end to the project.

Photius,

Photius, whom I mentioned, may also deserve particular notice. Never was there any Bishop more persecuted by the Popes than this illustrious Patriarch, who had more learning and greater abilities than almost all the Popes put together. He had the honour to be anathematized by seven of them during his life, and by four after his death. There is at Cambridge an old manuscript of his Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles, which are not published. But Oecumenius hath inserted extracts from them in his work, which is an useful collection from older Writers; and we cannot at present want Greek Commentaries * on the Scriptures, being so plentifully supplied with *English* ones.

There were always, even in the dark ages, Schools in the Cathedrals and the Monasteries, by which means some literature was kept up, in different nations, and at different times, first at Rome, then here in England, then in France, and then in Germany; and this way of education and instruction continued till the foundation of *Universities*, so called, because in them universal erudition, and all the Liberal Arts, were professed and taught.

* *Thick as autumnal leaves, that strew the brooks*

In Vallembrosa:

MILTON.

and as soon withered.

It must be owned, that at the revival of letters in the western world, polite and Classical literature, and the Philosophy of Plato and of Aristotle, were cultivated by ingenious and learned men, some of whom are much suspected to have had little or no religion. But these men never attacked Christianity directly; they outwardly conformed to it, as to the established religion; and learning soon got into better hands, and the improvement of it was carried on by real Christians, such as Erasmus, Luther, Budæus, Vives, Melancthon, Camerarius, and many others.

Monkery, which like a foul torrent, from the fourth century, overflowed the Christian world, produced many sad effects: but Providence here also brought good out of evil. The Monks were occupied in the transcribing of books: and though they preserved many Homilies and Theological tracts of the later Fathers, which we could well have spared, and neglected some valuable Authors whose loss we deplore, yet they transmitted to us those Latin and Greek Classics which we now possess, and which would have perished had it not been for their labours, and for the Libraries contained in their Monasteries. To them we owe
copies

copies of the Roman Law, of the Theodosian and Justinian Codes; and the Roman Laws being adopted; more or less, in Christian nations, and the study of them being honourable and profitable, conduced greatly to the preservation of literature in general, and of the Latin language in particular.

In the ninth century, the Saracens exerted themselves remarkably in the studious way, and contributed much to the restoration of letters in Europe. For this, the Deists will say, no thanks are due to Christianity, since these Saracens were Mahometans. But I say that whatever good is to be found in the Mahometan Religion, and some good doctrines and precepts there undeniably are in it, is in no small measure owing to Christianity. For Mahometism is a borrowed system, made up for the most part of Judaism and Christianity; and if it be considered in the most favourable view, might possibly be accounted a sort of Christian heresy. If the Gospel had never been preached, it may be questioned whether Mahometism would have existed. Its Author was an ignorant Knave and Fanatic, who had neither skill nor genius to form a religion out of his own head.

Now let us consider the subject in another way, and make the supposition that Christianity had been suppressed at its first appearance, and that no traces of it had been left.

In such a case it is extremely probable, that the Latin and Greek tongues would have been lost in the revolutions of empire, and the interruptions of Barbarians in the East and in the West; for the old inhabitants would have had no *conscientious* and *religious* motives to keep up their languages. And then, together with the Latin and Greek tongues, the knowledge of Antiquities, and the ancient writers would have been destroyed. You may see something of this kind in the present state of Africa, where the Latin tongue is absolutely unknown, although in the fifth century it was spoken there as in Italy. Idolatry and Superstition, in some shape or other, would have been the religion of the populace, and the upper sort would have been for the most part Sceptics or Atheists, with a mixture of some Deists. The Jewish Religion would possibly have subsisted, confined to its own people, whilst many of them would probably have been apostates. It is not so formed as to become the national religion of any other people; and indeed the evidences for it would have

have been weaker than they now are, wanting the assistance of Christianity, which is perhaps its principal support. There would then have been no public Schools*, no Cathedrals, no Universities for the promoting of erudition.

If the Scriptures have contributed so much to the preservation and propagation of the learned languages, the Papists may plead that the Latin Liturgy used by them hath in some degree the same good tendency. This we may grant; but they ought also to acknowledge that such a benefit is by no means sufficient to compensate the absurdity and iniquity of confining the Public Service to a tongue not understood by the Vulgar.

Whilst dead languages ought by all means to be studied, living ones ought by no means to be neglected; and our Bible and Common-Prayer-Book, besides their religious use, have contributed much to preserve and fix the English language.

* In the first Protestant Schools and Universities of Germany, most of the students were very poor. They supported themselves by begging, and singing Psalms from door to door; they studied by moon-light, for want of candles; they were pinched with cold and hunger: yet the earnest desire of erudition surmounted all these difficulties, and they became private tutors, schoolmasters, Preachers and Professors.

But give me leave to observe that the * Act of Uniformity hath expressly made an exception for Public Schools, and for Colleges, and permitted them the free use of the Latin Liturgy, in their own Chapels; upon the supposition that they would be glad to accept it.

To the Gospel then, and to those who embraced it, are due our grateful acknowledgments for the learning that is at present in the world. The infidels educated in Christian countries owe what learning they have to Christianity, and act the part of those brutes, which when they have sucked the dam, turn about and † strike her.

But doubtless they will put in their claim for a share in the merit of civilizing, reforming, and instructing the Public. Let us look a little at home, and see how the case stands amongst us.

Great Britain in this and the last century hath produced Deistical or Atheistical writers, as Herbert, Hobbes, Toland, Shaftsbury, Collins, Mandeville, Woolston, Tindal, Morgan, Chubb, Bolingbroke, Hume, and some who are anonymous.

* In the first Act confirming the Liturgy, in 1548, the Universities are permitted to use it in Latin, or in Greek, excepting the Office for the Communion. *Burnet.*

† ἀνομαλίζουσιν, as Plato said to his disciple Aristotle.

I shall

I shall not enter into a detail of the various things which are justly censurable in these Authors; but keeping the present subject in view, I observe that some of them have been ignorant and illiterate, most of them a sort of half-scholars, and retailers of second-hand wares, none of them eminently learned, or contributors to the advancement of erudition and knowledge in any material article.

To whom are we indebted for the knowledge of Antiquities, sacred and secular, for every thing that is called *Philology*, or the *Literæ Humaniores*? To Christians. To whom for Grammars and Dictionaries of the learned languages? To Christians. To whom for Chronology, and the continuation of History through many centuries? To Christians. To whom for rational systems of Morality and of Natural Religion? To Christians. To whom for improvements in Natural Philosophy, and for the application of these discoveries to religious purposes? To Christians. To whom for Metaphysical researches carried as far as the subject will permit? To Christians. To whom for the moral rules to be observed by nations in war and peace? To Christians. To whom for *Jurisprudence*, and for political knowledge,

and for settling the rights of subjects, both civil and religious, upon a proper foundation? To Christians. Not to Atheists or Deists, some of whom, as Hobbes in particular, have been known advocates for * tyranny. To whom for the great work of the Reformation? To Christians. Let me add; And very often to Christian Divines.

The reformation, besides many blessings, spiritual and temporal, which we reap from it, hath been of service even to the Papists, though they have not the gratitude to own it. Luther's attack obliged the Court of Rome to seek out methods of defence. The Croisades could no longer be carried on for the general extirpation of Heretics; the old system of Papal omnipotence began to grow rotten, and fall to pieces, to the comfort and relief of the Papists themselves. Other devices were necessary to supply these losses, such as new-modelled inquisi-

* Bolingbroke, whilst he was a Minister of State, persecuted the Dissenters, *for the good of the Church*; and afterwards wrote books, *for the good of Religion*. So he often assures us; and so the Hangman said to a young Prince (Don Carlos), when he was going to strangle him, *Pray, my Lord, be quiet; it is all for your good*. The comparison suits, if the story be true.

sions,

sitions, and the *Indices Expurgatorii*. But to these scandalous methods one was added, which should extort commendation even from an adversary: Their Clergy were earnestly exhorted to pursue learned studies, and considerable rewards were conferred on those who signalized themselves that way. The Romish Ecclesiastics would have been sunk in sloth and ignorance, if the Protestants had not roused them from their lethargy, and compelled them to write and read in behalf of a declining cause.

The Author of the Life of Cardinal Pole hath lately undertaken to recommend to us the very scum and dregs of Popery, and to vilify and calumniate the Reformation and the Reformers, in a bigoted, dissingenuous, and superficial performance. Yet even this poor attempt hath its use. It hath occasioned some good remarks already, and will receive farther correction from able hands. It may serve also to inform us of the true and the unalterable spirit of Popery, and to shew us what usage *

we

* Mary, Queen of Scots, wrote a Letter to the Fathers assembled at Trent, in which she declared that she submitted herself to that Council, and promised, as soon as she should be in possession of the crown of England that of right be-

we have to expect, if these Ecclesiastics could once more rule over us. It is fit that we should be sometimes put in mind of this: for we have been strangely apt to forget it, and to contradict a Proverb of our own, which says that *A burnt child dreads the fire.*

As Religion hath been the chief preserver of Erudition, so Erudition hath not been ungrateful to her Patroness, but hath contributed largely to the support of Religion. The useful expositions of the Scriptures, the sober and sensible defences of Revelation, the faithful representation of pure and undefiled Christianity, these have been the works of learned, judicious, and industrious men. The corruptions of the Gospel, the perverse interpretations and absurd senses put upon the word of God, both in matters of faith and of practice, these have been the inventions of men who had a small share of learning, and a large share of knavery, or of fanaticism, or of both blended together.

longed to her, to reduce the two kingdoms to the obedience of the holy See: This was in May 1563. *Du Pin*, T. xv. p. 291.

Hence it may be judged in what manner she would have ruled over us, if she had succeeded in her projects,

Fanatics

Fanatics are no friends to reason and learning; and not without some kind of reason; first, because they have usually a slender provision of either; secondly, because a man hath no occasion to spend his time and his pains in the studious way, who hath an inward illumination to guide him to truth, and to make such labour unnecessary.

I conclude that the learning which now exists, is, if not solely, yet principally to be ascribed to Christianity; and that its Divine Author said most justly of himself, in this sense also,

I am the light of the world.

CHARGE II.

MAY 15, 1767.

The Use and Importance of
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.*My Reverend Brethren,*

THE subject on which I propose at the present to offer you some observations, is the Use and Importance of Ecclesiastical History, which, next to the holy Scriptures, deserves the regard of every man of letters, and more particularly of every Divine; and the study of which I would recommend to you, assuming to myself the privilege of Age and of Academical Standing, in which I am, with respect to many of you, what St. Jerom once said to St. Augustin,

Ætate Parens, meritis Discipulus.

Ecclesi-

Ecclesiastical History, at large, is the History of the Church of God in all ages; but I shall only consider it from the times which immediately followed those of the Apostles, and begin where the New Testament ends.

If a studious person were to propose to go up to the fountain-head, to have recourse to Originals, and to read all the Christian Historians, and all the Fathers, and all the Acts of the Councils of the Six first Centuries, with a view to obtain a knowledge of the Ecclesiastical History during that period; besides the difficulty of procuring good editions of all those books, besides the intolerable fatigue of perusing and examining them and the commentaries upon them, he would find that his time had not been employed to the best advantage, and that the profit was not equal to the labour, unless he intended himself to write the History of those times.

From the revival of Letters, and the beginning of the Reformation, many good Ecclesiastical Histories have been compiled in Latin, in French, and in English: as all other branches of literature have been diligently cultivated; and by the labours of our worthy predecessors

deceffors the way to obtain erudition hath been greatly facilitated,

As to Christian Antiquities, a moderate knowledge of them may certainly be acquired without perufing one Original, and lies within the reach even of an English Reader. Yet a Divine, I think, fhould not content himfelf willingly with mere fecond-hand knowledge. If he hath leifure and opportunity for it, he fhould read the following Authors in their own language, and in the beft editions, with the notes which the Editors have added to them;

First, The Apoftolical Fathers;

Secondly, The Ancient Christian Apologifts;

Thirdly, Eufebius, and the other Greek Hiftorians who are joined to him.

This cannot be called a task too hard and heavy to a perfon of a liberal and learned education; and when this is done, modern Authors will be fufficient guides through the following centuries.

This method purfued will of courfe keep up a knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages; and this advantage will be obtained, though it be not the principal point in view.

And .

And as Ecclesiastical is closely connected with Civil and Secular History, a knowledge of this also will be spontaneously added to the other, and be acquired *aliud agendo*.

In this course of study, we must judge for ourselves, and be upon our guard; since of all Ecclesiastical Writers, ancient and modern, there is hardly one who hath not some bias and some prejudices, and who will not mislead us, if we submit implicitly to all his opinions. Of the modern Writers upon this subject, Mosheim seems to me to be one of the most instructing and impartial.

I come now to represent the uses of Ecclesiastical History.

1. Ecclesiastical History will shew us the amazing progress of Christianity through the Roman Empire, through the East and through the West, during the three first Centuries, though the Powers of this World strenuously and cruelly opposed it; though poverty and infamy, distress and oppression, the loss of friends, property, liberty, and life, were often the lot of its professors.

Sanguis Martyrum, semen Ecclesiae, is an old and a true saying. It was by patiently suffering persecution, and not by persecuting others, that

that Christians recommended themselves to reasonable and well-disposed people.

Machiavel hath observed somewhere that unarmed Prophets never performed any great feats; and St. Francis Xavier, the famous Apostle of the Indians, acknowledges that Missionaries without Muskets seldom do their work effectually. As to Popish Prophets and Apostles, we will not dispute the point: but a man must be no less ignorant than profane, who does not discern that Jesus Christ, the most unarmed of all men, was He whose conquests were the most rapid and the most durable; such conquests as he aimed at by gaining the hearts and changing the dispositions from evil to good; which no Conqueror besides himself ever proposed and ever effected.

From this early propagation of Christianity many arguments are deduced to shew the truth of our Religion, and the divine assistance by which it prospered and prevailed.

After Constantine embraced the Gospel, and Christianity in the fourth Century was by Law established, the number of Christians was greatly multiplied, and many nations in process of time were converted.

But

But from this extensive increase no direct proof, I think, can be drawn of the truth of our religion. The only use of that kind that we can make of it, is to shew that it was the completion of some prophecies.

Rewards were then bestowed upon those who received, and punishments were inflicted upon those who rejected the Gospel; by which means the Church was filled with nominal Christians, who either were allured by the loaves and fishes, or terrified by the fear of suffering.

Thus the Christians returned upon the inhuman and persecuting Pagans some of the ill treatment which they themselves had received; nor could the latter with a good grace complain of such usage, of which they had set the example. But it was not a conduct worthy of the followers of Christ, or suitable to the spirit of the Gospel, to have recourse to Civil Magistrates, and to Imperial Edicts, to suppress a Superstition which must soon have fallen of itself. The Laws in the Theodosian and Justinian Codes against Pagans, Heretics, and Schismatics, are a disgrace to Christianity.

True it is that from the days of Constantine, an innumerable multitude of miracles is reported

ported to have been performed by Prelates, by Monks, by Hermits, by the Reliques of the Saints, by Angels, by the Virgin Mary, for the propagation of the Faith, and for the confutation of Jews, of Pagans, and particularly of Heretics.

But it is no less true that these miracles have such plain marks upon them of pious fraud and forgery, that no reasonable and unprejudiced persons can believe them, though they be supported by Ecclesiastical Historians, and by the venerable names of Fathers of the Church, of St. Athanasius, St. Jerom, St. Ambrose, St. Augustin, and many other Saints.

So far were these pious tricks from promoting the Christian cause, that there is reason to think that they kept many learned and sensible Pagans from embracing a Religion which stood in need of such supports. So far were they from establishing Orthodoxy, or what was called Orthodoxy, that they must have increased the disgust, and strengthened the prejudices, of Schismatics and Heretics.

II. Ecclesiastical History, concurring with Jewish and with Pagan History, shews us the total destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the Jewish Church and State, and

the continuance of that unhappy nation for seventeen hundred years, a nation still numerous, though dispersed over the face of the earth, and most cruelly oppressed at different times by Pagans, by Christians, and by Mahometans.

Herein we see the remarkable predictions of our Lord fully accomplished, and a confirmation of the authority of those Books of the New Testament which were written before that great event.

These divine judgments upon the Jews are to be considered as a national punishment; and as such they remain in full force, notwithstanding any wealth, any prosperity, any settlements, any possessions and privileges which any individuals may acquire in Pagan, Christian, or Mahometan nations. No favours of that kind can defeat the prophecies concerning them, as some have pretended. To be deprived for so many centuries of their own country, their own temple, and their own civil government, are proofs that they are no longer God's people, and that they can become his people no other way than by being the servants of his Christ, and by embracing the Gos-

pel.

pel; which we hope will be brought to pass in due time.

III. Ecclesiastical History informs us, how the increase of Christianity produced, in the countries where it was received, the overthrow and extinction of Paganism, which, after a feeble resistance, perished about the sixth Century.

Hereby were accomplished two signal prophecies:

The one of Malachi;

“ From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.”

The other of Jeremiah;

“ The Gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.”

This prediction of Jeremiah was uttered in the time of the Babylonian Captivity, when there was not the least prospect of such an event. But it came to pass that the Gods of

the Babylonians, of the Egyptians, and of other Eastern nations, the Gods of Greece and of Rome, were entirely deserted and neglected. Their names subsist, recorded in ancient Authors; but for these thousand years past they have not had one temple, or one worshipper under heaven.

Paganism, or Idolatry, or the worship of false Gods, or, to set it in the most favourable light, the worship of one Supreme God and Father, and of many inferior Deities, was a very ancient Superstition, contrived in ignorant, barbarous, and fabulous ages; but it was the corruption of a still more ancient, and a true religion, the religion of Adam, of Noah, and of Abraham, who professed the doctrine of one God and Father, and who probably were all acquainted with the doctrine of Angels, or ministering Spirits.

Paganism was supported by miracles and prophecies; miracles wrought for the most part by the Gods, and oracles, most of which were of the prophetic kind, uttered usually by the Priests. These seem to have been mere lies and impostures of men; though many are of opinion that there might possibly be sometimes

some

some Diabolical operations, and some intervention of evil Spirits.

This system of Religion was so excessively knavish, absurd and wicked, that as the world grew more polished and enlightened, it was derided and exposed by the Philosophers, and slighted by men of fashion and fortunes, who in our Saviour's time were running into Scepticism and Atheism, as many of them are now. However, the external part of Paganism and the old Ritual was kept up, in compliance with immemorial custom, and with the superstition of the Vulgar, who were much affected with Sacrifices, Processions, Auguries, Auspices, and Sibylline Oracles. When any calamity befell the public, a neglect of the ancient Rites and Ceremonies would have produced tumults and insurrections.

This ridiculous worship of Idols and false Deities, which has been kept up for prudential and political causes, and supported by the bigotry of the populace, and by the authority of Princes and Magistrates, fell almost of its own accord as soon as there was opportunity for inquiry, and men might profess themselves Christians without danger. The lowest of the people in the country villages adhered for some

time to their Idolatry; and the Platonic Philosophers, the last learned defenders of Paganism, vainly endeavoured to refine and spiritualize it, and to turn it into a system fit for Enthusiasts and Fanatics like themselves. Indeed, before Christian Rulers abolished Idolatry, and demolished or shut up Temples by Imperial Edicts, the Christians were a numerous and a considerable body in the Roman Empire. They were sober, industrious, and charitable; they took great care of their own poor; they paid great respect to their own Clergy; their several Churches exercised hospitality towards each other, and corresponded together, and were closely joined in all things relating to their common interest. Constantine therefore proposed to himself no small advantage by taking them under his protection, and by professing Christianity; and had little to fear from the resentment of the Pagans, who were not so connected by social ties, and who sat loose to religion.

IV. Ecclesiastical History shews us how Christianity hath been continued and delivered down from the Apostolical to the present age;

When

When we consider how many enemies the Church hath had, both within and without, we must acknowledge it the work of Providence that it hath hitherto subsisted.

The method by which Providence hath accomplished this, hath been by preserving the Scriptures, and particularly the Gospel.

We find that in the second Century the Books of the New Testament were widely spread, and well-known, and received by Christians, as a sacred rule of faith and manners; whilst the disciples and successors of the Apostles were still living.

If these writings had been lost in the second Century, even the shadow of Christianity would not have now subsisted, and the doctrines of Christ would have been as little known or regarded as the doctrines of Zoroaster.

When afterwards, in the third century, and in the Diocletian persecution, an attempt was made by the Pagans to destroy those sacred Records, it was too late, it was to no purpose. The Scriptures were too far spread, and lodged in too many hands, to be suppressed; Christianity had made a progress beyond the power and the jurisdiction of the persecuting Emperors; and Constantine the father of Constantine

was very favourable to the Christians of Gaul and Britain who were his subjects, and protected them as much as he could. Some Christians were compelled to deliver up their sacred Books; but many more concealed and kept them safe.

In this third century great care was taken to transcribe correct copies and different versions of the Scriptures.

Afterwards, even in the most dark, ignorant and superstitious ages, copies of the Scriptures and translations of the Scriptures were still preserved in various Cathedrals and Monasteries; some people perused them, some use was made of them, and also of the ancient Fathers, and some knowledge of Christianity was kept up by these means.

It is to the Scriptures, and to the free use of them, that the Reformation owes its birth and progress; and since that time learned men have taken commendable pains to collect and to examine their various readings, and to settle the Text in the Critical and Grammatical way, which is the only foundation upon which rational interpretations can be built.

V. Ecclesiastical History will shew us the various opinions which prevailed at different times

times amongst the Fathers and other Christians from the days of the Apostles, and how they departed more or less from the simplicity of the Gospel. For example;

We find the generality of Christians in ancient times, in opposition to the Valentiniāns, to the Manichæans, and to other Fatalists, to have been strenuous defenders of that liberty by which we are enabled to do well, or to do ill. They admitted no Divine Decrees which necessitated human creatures, or which excluded any of them from salvation, for the sin of their first parent. Such were the sentiments of Justin Martyr, of Origen, of Chrysostom, and indeed of all the Greek Fathers; and of the Latin Fathers also, till St. Augustin arose and introduced the System of Christian Fatalism.

We find in the four or five first Centuries some notions adopted into religion from the doctrines of Plato and of the Platonists; and afterwards another set of notions, when the Scholastic Theology prevailed, borrowed from the Philosophy of Aristotle.

VI. Ecclesiastical History will enable us to form a true judgment of the merit of the Fathers,

thers, and of the use which is to be made of them.

The Papists, in their disputes with the Protestants, have ever made a great stir about the Fathers, magnifying their authority, and claiming their testimony and patronage in behalf of Popery. And yet if the contest were to be decided by these Arbitrators, they would be cast in many points. Being conscious of this, they extol the Fathers, when they think that they have them on their side; and when they must give them up, they prefer the authority of their own Popes and Councils, and of what they call the Catholic Church, to any or to all the Fathers joined together; or they put forced interpretations upon their words against all rules of Grammar and Criticism; or they boldly reject them as put in by Heretics; and they have made no scruple in their Expurgatory Indexes to strike out all such passages in the Fathers as are directly against their notions. Thus when the Ancients are with them, they are Fathers; when against them, they are Children; and it certainly behoves them to treat St. Cyprian as a Child; for if his authority be any thing, the Pope's authority is nothing:

thing: he hath cut it up from the root, by establishing the parity of Bishops.

Some of our Divines have held the Fathers and the General Councils in high veneration, and have paid a superstitious kind of regard to their decisions. We have ever since the Reformation shewed them more deference than other Protestant Writers; and therefore the Papists have usually attacked us with expressions taken from their works; although many of their noted Divines have been less disposed to submit to the authority of the Fathers than many Divines of our Church.

The necessity of allowing no infallible Teacher but Christ and his Apostles, and no Rule of Faith but the Scriptures, excited learned Protestants, as Daille, and Barbeyrac, and our Whitby, and some others, to oppose this slavish and dangerous reverence for Antiquity.

They have therefore observed that the Fathers themselves disclaim such authority as Teachers, or such a submission to their doctrines, as these Moderns are willing to grant them:

That they have frequently affirmed the Scriptures to be the only Rule of faith, and to be
suf-

sufficiently clear in all points necessary to salvation :

That they themselves are to be judged by Scripture and Reason, which must be our last resort in all religious inquiries :

That it is not easy to come at their meaning, on account of their style, which wants precision and perspicuity, and of their rhetorical flourishes and exaggerations; that if, for example, you appeal to them about the Eucharist, you find them talking obscurely, and making mysteries where there are none, sometimes saying things which favour the Papists or the Lutherans, sometimes things which favour us :

That they do not always give us their real thoughts and sentiments, but dissemble them, and comply with vulgar prejudices :

That they differ widely from each other in many Theological points :

That there appears in some of them a spirit of persecution, superstition, litigation and bigotry :

That their writings have been augmented, curtailed, and corrupted by fools and knaves in so many places, that we cannot be sure of knowing what is, and what is not theirs.

Though

Though indeed, since the times of the Reformation, much care and pains have been bestowed by learned Editors to give us correct copies of their genuine works, which are in far better condition than they were before :

That they abound with allegorical and mystical interpretations of Scripture, which are always unsatisfactory, and often excessively frivolous and ridiculous :

That Jerom and other Latin Fathers censure Origen and his followers for this childish and licentious method of expounding Scripture, whilst they themselves are not one jot less faulty than he in the very same way :

That the practical religion which they teach is erroneous ; in some points absurdly rigid, in other cases too relaxed and indulgent :

In a word, that they are unsafe guides both in Theology and Morality.

Such are the objections of these Protestant Writers, most of which are so well supported, that it is not possible to refute them.

But it would be a false inference to conclude from the blemishes and mistakes of the Fathers, that they are to be cast aside as altogether useless.

Considered

Considered as Classic Authors, they are as valuable as their Pagan contemporaries, and contain instruction of the Grammatical, Critical, and Philological kind.

They are unexceptionable witnesses from age to age of the authenticity and genuineness of the New Testament; they shew us evidently that they had the same Scriptures which we now have.

They serve to settle the true readings of the New Testament, and are of the more importance, as we have hardly any manuscripts older than the fifth century, and but few of those.

The Fathers, particularly the Greek Fathers, are in some places useful Interpreters of the Scriptures.

If we take them in the character of Historians, though they be not professedly such, they are witnesses and recorders of the customs and opinions of Christians, Jews, and Pagans, and represent to us the state of the Church and of the Empire.

Thus, for example, the works of Chrysostom throw much light on the customs and manners of the fourth and fifth centuries. This popular Orator hath introduced in his discourses, and in his

his other writings, the transactions, and particularly the vices and the follies of his own times, often entering into a minute detail. He shews us the vanity, dissipation, levity, pride, voluptuousness, effeminacy, luxury, debauchery, and superstition, which abounded in those days; to which is to be added the spirit of Theological altercation and of oppression that reigned amongst the Monks and the Prelates, of which his own sufferings were a sad proof, all foreboding and forerunning and naturally producing the great corruption of the Church, and the fall of the Roman Empire in the East and in the West. To God's good providence and to the promise of our Lord it is to be ascribed that Christianity was not obliterated in ensuing times. The holy Scriptures and some old Christian Records escaped the hands of so many false friends and open foes, and were the means by which Religion was kept from perishing till the Reformation; and since the Reformation, Christianity hath been better defended and explained than it had been in any age after the Apostolical days.

As to General Councils *, which have been

* Hooker is of opinion, that Civil government ariseth from compact, and is of human institution; that arbitrary empire

too much extolled by Papists and by some Protestants, they were a collection of men who were frail and fallible; and some of those Councils were not assemblies of pious and learned Divines, but Cabals, the majority of which were quarrelsome, fanatical, domineering, dishonest Prelates, who wanted to compel men to approve all their opinions of which they themselves had no clear conceptions, and to anathematize and oppress those who would not implicitly submit to their determinations. If these men found out the Truth, or if the Truth found them out, it must have been by strange good luck.

But although we allow not the authority of the Fathers in matters of faith, and though we charge them with many mistakes, yet as to their persons, we hold them, or several of them, in estimation, especially those of the three first centuries, the times of Martyrs and Confessors. We reverence their self-denial, patience, courage and constancy under great sufferings, is detestable, and that, as he well observes, *To live by one man's will is the cause of all men's misery*. But when he talks of the utility of General Councils, he seems not to be *The Judicious Hooker*. In disputing with the Fanatics of his days, he is very rational and skilful: but as to ancient Ecclesiastical History, he had superficial notions of it, and was not emancipated from the common prejudices of his times.

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their pious labours in propagating Christianity; their useful treatises in defence of the gospel against Infidels. They had their blemishes; and so have the most eminent:

Nullum sine venia placuit Ingenium.

In excuse of their errors and defects we are willing to admit any fair plea that candor and charity can suggest. But to excuse them is one thing; to be guided by them is another thing.

VII. Ecclesiastical history will shew us one evil, than which none began sooner, or stretched itself farther, or hath more disturbed and distressed the Christian world in all ages; and that evil is, The imposing unreasonable terms of communion, and requiring Christians to profess doctrines; not propounded in scriptural words; but inferred as consequences from passages of scripture; which one may call Systems of *Consequential Divinity*.

Two authors; who have been an honour to this nation; have expressed themselves with remarkable strength and freedom in censuring such impositions, namely John Hales and Chillingworth; and many things tending to the same purpose may be found in the works of other eminent divines.

I could produce a long list of questions relating to critical, metaphysical, speculative divinity, which happily are left at large, and not converted into articles of faith. And what is the consequence? The consequence is that many even of the learned never think at all about them; that they who have considered them are of diverse opinions; that inquisitive men have disputed about them; and that peevish men have abused one another about them. But no schism hath been caused, nor hath the peace of the church or state been disturbed by them.

Even the Romish church, bigoted and tyrannical as she is, hath left sundry points at large; as for example, the immaculate conception of the Virgin; the power of the pope in temporal matters; the persons in whom infallibility resides, whether in the pope alone, or in a general council, or in both together, or in the whole catholic church; and whether this same infallibility reaches to matters of fact, or only to matters of doctrine. The fathers of the Council of Trent drew up some of their articles of faith in a shuffling and ambiguous manner, to avoid offending some of their own fraternity, and to leave a latitude of opinion.

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They were much perplexed and divided in their sentiments concerning original sin, and justification. They ought therefore to have left those litigated points undecided. A man indeed makes a ridiculous figure, who claiming infallibility, exerts it not in deciding religious controversies. What else is it good for? But then grievous inconveniencies arise from using this divine gift too freely. The popes of the last century had acted more discreetly, if they had left open and undecided the contention between the Jesuits and the Jansenists about predestination, free-will, and grace, and had permitted their catholic subjects to join either with St. Augustine, Jansenius, and John Calvin, or with all the Greek fathers, and with the Arminians.

I have heard it said that one of the popes of those times, being pressed to decide this controversy, replied: Why do they tease me with theological questions! I am not a divine; I am a canonist.

There are two more points relating to ecclesiastical history, which particularly deserve the consideration of the clergy. They are,

D d 2

First,

First; The origin and progress of popery:

Secondly, The origin and progress of the reformation.

But these I reserve, if it please God, to another opportunity,

I have heard it said that one of the popes of those times, being pressed to decide this controversy, replied: Why do they trouble me with theological questions? I am not a divider, but a reconciler.

There are two more points relating to ecclesiastical history, which particularly deserve the consideration of the clergy. They are

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CHARGE III.

APRIL 29, 1768.

The Use and Importance of ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

My Reverend Brethren,

IN treating of the use and importance of Ecclesiastical History, I reserved two points, which more particularly require the consideration of the clergy. They are,

First, The origin and progress of popery:

Secondly, The origin and progress of the reformation.

As to the origin and progress of popery:

Whilst it shall please God to suffer that deplorable corruption of Christianity, called Popery, to occupy so large a portion of the Christian world, there must be

Litora litoribus contraria.

A reunion between them and us is an utter impossibility; and the project of a reconciliation is a strange absurdity, though it hath been sometimes attempted by some persons of considerable abilities. Fire and water may as soon make an alliance. In the points wherein we differ, they expect that we should yield and submit to them in all things, and we can submit to them in nothing.

Of all protestant nations there is perhaps not one which hath suffered so much from popery as ours, not one which hath more reason to dread and abhor that religion.

England for some centuries before the reformation was the most pope-ridden country in Christendom; and since that happy revolution, our papists have usually been enemies to the state as much as to the church. It is to be feared that they will hardly be good subjects to any prince whom they call an heretic, unless in process of time they should be altered much for the better, which is to be wished for their sakes as well as ours.

One of the arguments used even by men of parts and learning in behalf of popery is this:

It is impossible, say they, that the church of Rome should be corrupted in points of faith, because such corruptions must have had a beginning, they must once have been novelties; and then they would certainly have been opposed and rejected by Christians, by religious emperors, pious bishops, eminent saints, holy councils, and particularly by the popes, when the first attempts were made to introduce them. Therefore our present doctrine is that of the primitive church.

It is silly and impudent to argue thus against plain matters of fact, and in support of doctrines which are contrary to scripture, to Christian antiquities, and to common sense. If they are such, and carry their own conviction along with them, what signifies it when they crept in, and whether we can give an account of their birth and education?

But here the knowledge of ecclesiastical history is of singular service to us, and enables us to trace the origin and the progress of those false doctrines.

Thus, for example, we can point out the time pretty nearly when pictures and images found their way into churches, and began to be revered, and when the direct worship of

them was introduced; which though set up in ignorant and superstitious times, yet met with a long and a violent opposition through the whole Christian world, till at length popes, and priests, and monks, and women, and factious councils, and wicked princes established it; and this species of idolatry was triumphant. One of its chief supporters amongst the ecclesiastics was John Damascene, an eminent saint of the eighth century, and an eminent liar.

It is well known that Epiphanius, a father of the fourth century, destroyed a picture of Christ, or of some saint, which he found hung up in a church, accounting it to be a superstitious and idolatrous ornament. So early was this abuse creeping into the Christian world?

Thus also in the ninth century Paschasius Radbertus, in a Treatise on the Eucharist, laid the foundation for the doctrine of transubstantiation amongst the Latins, and taught that only the figure or appearance of bread and wine remained, and that the true body and blood of Christ was present. He met with warm contradiction on account of this novel interpretation. The disputants upon this point talked obscurely and inconsistently, except Joannes Scotus, who, being a man of sense and a philo-

philosopher, expressed himself with clearness and precision, and said that the bread and wine were visible representations and memorials of the absent body and blood of Christ. Such afterwards was the doctrine of the learned reformer Zuinglius.

At last, as one error begets another, it was decreed that the deified elements should be adored with divine worship, a practice unknown before the twelfth century.

One observation hath often occurred to me, relating to the monstrous system of popery, which I think may deserve to be considered. It is this:

When we reflect upon the errors, the false doctrines, and corrupt practices of that church, and compare them with the dictates of reason, and with the word of God, they appear so groundless, so absurd, so despicable, so scandalous, that we are amazed how Christians, how rational creatures, could adopt them. But place them in another point of view, and consider them as political institutions, and you will find them to be an uniform, a consistent, and a very crafty scheme, full of wisdom, that is, of worldly wisdom, and all the parts of it conspiring to one great end, namely, to exalt the ecclesi-

ecclesiastical state, to give it wealth, dignity, and authority; to keep the civil state and the body of Christians in ignorance, superstition, implicit faith, and passive obedience; and to make the head of the church an universal monarch, and an absolute tyrant. There is hardly any Romish error to be named that hath not this tendency. At the same time the mysterious nature of religion, and the darkness of human reason, and the danger of private judgment were sedulously inculcated, to keep people indolent, credulous, tame, and quiet.

Many were the false notions and unjustifiable practices which crept into the church in early times, in the fourth century, and were the forerunners and introducers of popery. As for example;

First, An immoderate esteem for celibacy and virginity, for a retirement from the world, for voluntary poverty, and voluntary austerities.

This produced those decrees of the Latin church against the marriage of the clergy, those swarms of monks, and that variety of religious brotherhoods and sisterhoods, which being nursed in the warm climates of the East, proceeded

proceeded to the West, and over-tan every Christian country, turning sober religion into fanatical superstition, and producing execrable debaucheries, and numberless other evils. The monks in later ages were proper tools in the hands of ambitious popes, to whom they professed the most slavish obedience, and by whom they were protected and caressed.

Secondly, The inflicting of pains and penalties upon those who differed in their religious opinion from the majority. They were anathematized by the church, and the emperors were persuaded to make oppressive and cruel laws against them.

Grotius, who cannot be charged with a want of veneration for old fathers and councils, yet could not refrain from censuring their overbearing proceedings, and says: It seems to me that the ancient ecclesiastics were too ready to turn Christians out of doors, because they could not adopt all their opinions, and submit to all their decisions.

Thirdly, The practice of collecting reliques, of digging up the bodies of real or imaginary saints and martyrs, and depositing them in holy places with great solemnity.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, The use of pious frauds, and the custom of lying for God's sake, and of maintaining false miracles wrought by holy men, by the reliques of saints, and by images, founded upon this pernicious principle that, it is lawful to deceive the common people for their good, and for the advancement of religion. Scarcely can any one father of the fourth and fifth centuries be named who was free from this blemish. The expedience of political lies they might perhaps learn from Plato, who recommends them; from the gospel they could not learn it. But the practice hath been faithfully and inviolably kept up from that day to this.

When Jerom in the fifth century wrote in defence of the religious respect due to reliques, and of the wonders wrought by them, and insulted and abused Vigilantius, who had the courage to oppose this bigotry and these impostures, he informs us that there were even some bishops who took part with Vigilantius, and were guilty of the same horrible impiety.

When Sulpitius Severus about the same time wrote the Life of St. Martin, filled with absurd and incredible miracles, he himself lets us know that he was censured by scoffers as a re-
later

later of fables. He persists, as it may be supposed, in maintaining these fables, and is very angry with those who would not believe him.

We have not exact accounts of all that passed in the Christian world in those days; yet from the accounts which we have, we may conclude that there were many persons who disliked pious frauds, but found it neither possible to undeceive the superstitious public, nor safe to attempt it.

Fifthly, An adoption and imitation of Pagan rites and ceremonies, partly introduced to allure the Pagans to Christianity, and to amuse them with solemnities to which they had been accustomed.

Thus in the room of Pagan festivals, the Christian holidays were introduced, and often occupied the same places in the Calendar.

The conformity between Rome Pagan and Rome Christian, in which the latter imitated the former, is generally asserted by protestants, and not denied by many of the papists; and it hath been demonstrated in such a variety of circumstances, that it seems impossible for an unprejudiced inquirer not to yield to such overbearing evidence. I have observed, in reading the miracles contained in ecclesiastical history,

history, that the compilers of the old legends and lives of the saints, not having genius enough to invent a sufficient quantity of new prodigies, having perused the Pagan poets and historians, such as Ovid and Livy, and had picked out the marvellous tales that they found there, and adapted them to their own saints, monks, and hermits.

To the numerous conformities which have been observed between Pagan and Christian superstitions, may be added the custom of leaving legacies to the gods. The Roman laws, to keep this bigotry in some bounds, excluded several upstart gods and goddesses from inheriting such donations.

Deos heredes instituire non possumus, says Ulpian, præter eos quos Senatus-consultis, et Constitutionibus Principum instituire concessum est, sicuti Jovem Tarpeium, &c.

Christians made the same gifts to their saints; and Justus Lipsius bequeathed his furred gown to the virgin, *Dive Virgini Hallensi*, to the virgin goddess of Hall, whose wonderful works he had recorded; a proper wrapper to keep her and her miracles warm, as some profane protestant observed.

Lastly,

Lastly, The encroachments of the bishops of Rome, which began in the fourth century, if not sooner, and were uniformly continued and extended by all succeeding popes, saints as well as sinners, till at length they claimed absolute dominion, spiritual and temporal.

First they acquired jurisdiction over all the Western bishops; then they attempted to do the same in the East, and excommunicated the patriarchs of Constantinople for opposing their insolence; then they assumed a sort of infallibility, and a superiority over general councils.

In the fifth century they were usurping, domineering, persecuting prelates, whilst the bishops of Constantinople were more decent and moderate.

At the same time the clergy by imperial edicts were declared exempt from the authority of civil magistrates, and only to be judged in ecclesiastical courts. These privileges and immunities were extended more and more, and became an intolerable evil. At length every one was permitted to appeal to the pope, who was in all causes and over all persons supreme.

Then the authority of popes, of councils, and of canons began in reality to be preferred

to that of the scriptures, which were little regarded.

In the eighth century the power of ecclesiastics was far more extensive in the West than in the East, and so it continued to be in succeeding ages. The barbarous nations then ruling in Europe had before their conversion to Christianity been under the government of their own priests. The same obedience they now were willing to pay to the Christian clergy; and hence arose the authority and the riches of the European bishops.

This temporal prosperity of the church began with its head, and thence was diffused by degrees, and descended to the prelates, the priests, and the monastic families. For in the opinion of those barbarous nations the Roman pontiff succeeded to the rights and powers of the *pontifex maximus*, and of the high priest of the druids, whose authority had been incredible; and his holiness, as head of the church, had a title to the same honours. Hence he acquired his jurisdiction even as to things temporal, and to civil government, which was still more increased and confirmed by a most pernicious opinion, the parent of so many wars and calamities, that he who was

excom-

excommunicated by Popes and prelates forfeited all the rights not only of a citizen, but of an human creature. This notion, which was borrowed from Pagan superstition, crept into the church, to the unspeakable detriment of all Europe.

To this may be added the policy, the false policy, as the event shewed, of emperors and princes, who thought that they might more safely lodge great power in the hands of popes and prelates, than in those of their turbulent nobles, and govern their subjects more easily by the assistance of ecclesiastics, whose excommunications and excommunications were so revered and feared by the stupid world.

At this time the popes became temporal princes, and had considerable territories.

In the ninth century they began to claim and exert a right to dispose of kingdoms.

The tenth century is branded with the ignominious title of *Seculum Obscurum*. An age it was of profound darkness and ignorance, and of no less wickedness.

Whatever different judgments historians have passed in general concerning the state of Christianity in this century, in one point they

† Mosheim.

all agree, in acknowledging the most lamentable condition of the church and the see of Rome; and none have complained more of it than some popish writers. The church, say they, was like the ship in which Christ and his apostles were sailing, when the wind was contrary and tempestuous, and the vessel just sinking; but Christ lay asleep.

Five of the popes of this century were not men, but monsters. The city of Rome was under the dominion of infamous harlots, who made and unmade popes at their pleasure, and filled St. Peter's chair with their own gallants, and with their own bastards, with ignorant and wicked boys, who were to be considered as intruders and false popes. The canons and decrees of former ages, and the traditions concerning the due election of popes, were trampled under foot. Thus saith Baronius, who cannot be suspected of representing things worse than they were. But he could not deny facts so evident, and yet so mortifying to the church of Rome.

For according to the popish system which makes it necessary that Christ should have a

* Sergius, John X. John XI. John XII. Bonifacius.

visible

visible deputy and vicegerent upon earth, it can hardly be proved that there was a church existing; and it is unaccountable that an infallible head should be a creature of such importance; and that earth and hell, if they had been ransacked, could not have furnished more despicable and profligate wretches for that purpose.

And yet even from this deplorable state of the Romish church, some popish writers have drawn an argument in behalf of their religion. It is, say they, a proof of God's particular providence in support of the church, that these execrable pontiffs did not add heresy to their other crimes, nor attempt to subvert the catholic faith in any article, which was preserved safe and sound even in such vile hands.

Thus learned and ingenious men, such as Fenelon the archbishop of Cambray, and some others, will have recourse to arguments, of which men of sense, not enslaved to an hypothesis, would be ashamed. For that those wicked popes did not profess heresy, is so far from being miraculous, that it would rather have been a miracle if they had not acted thus.

They held all their wealth and power, and enjoyed all their vicious pleasures by pretensions to orthodoxy, and if they had broached any heresies, the world, blind and bigoted as it was, would not have endured them. John the XXIIId, in the fourteenth century, was an example of it. This pope, being fool enough to set up for a divine, and to broach a doctrine novel and heretical, as it was then called, that the souls of the saints did not see God till after the resurrection, was in no small danger. The king of France threatened to burn him alive, and he was forced to shuffle and to recant.

The popes of the tenth century had other occupations for their minds and bodies, such as fornication, adultery, extortion, pillage, simony, luxury, poisoning, assassinating, and so forth.

Heresies real or imaginary, are seldom broached by such sort of people, but usually by ingenious, sober, serious contemplative, studious, melancholy, and enthusiastic men. If ecclesiastical debauchees are infidels or atheists, they have commonly the wit to keep it to themselves, and are contented to say in
their

their hearts and to their intimates, Christianity is a fable, and there is no God:

It is certain that the popes of the following centuries were far more pernicious to Christendom than these despicable and debauched pontiffs. If their private conduct was more regular, they carried their spiritual and temporal pretensions much higher. They fleeced, or rather flayed the clergy and the laity; they excited subjects to rebel against their excommunicated governors; they dethroned kings, and gave away their kingdoms; they involved nations in wars which destroyed thousands and ten thousands; they established inquisitions, and massacred innumerable schismatics and heretics, as they called them.

The tenth century is observed to have been an age of peace and quiet as to doctrines, and void both of heresies and of theological controversies, which however is not to be ascribed to piety and knowledge, but to indolence and ignorance. Magic, or the art of conjuring, is said to have been almost the only learning of the priests.

Yet in this century, Christianity, such as it was, made no small progress. The Normans and many of the inhabitants of Crete, and the

people who dwelt by the Baltic sea were converted; Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Hungary, Muscovy, Russia, Sclavonia, Prussia, received Christianity. From Norway Christianity passed to the Orcades, to Iceland, and to Greenland. And in Germany, by the endeavours of the emperors, many Pagans in those extensive regions were converted.

This century produced some historians who are not contemptible, of whom the most considerable was the emperor Constantinus Porphyrogénitus; some men of tolerable learning and abilities; some divines, as Oecumenius, a commentator on the scriptures, though no original writer, yet a good compiler; some popes and some bishops who had no bad character, and who endeavoured to reform the vices of the clergy; some prelates and ecclesiastics who performed noble acts of hospitality and charity; others who boldly opposed papal encroachments and predominant errors. In England the Bible was translated into the Saxon tongue; and we had divines who rejected the doctrine of the bodily presence of Christ in the eucharist.

Silvester II. Leo VII. Marinus II. Agapetus II. Benedict IV.

At this time also the Nestorians, who dwelt in Chaldea, introduced Christianity amongst the Tartars, who till then had been a people most rude, barbarous, illiterate, and irreligious, as also in the confines of the northern parts of China.

In a word; the Sacraments were administered, the public service of the church was not interrupted, the scriptures and the works of the fathers were preserved, and accessible to the learned. Thus Christianity, though very sick and feeble, was not dead and buried.

In the eleventh century, the execrable Hildebrand, called Gregory the seventh, subverted all the ancient privileges of kings and princes, of councils and bishops, of clergy and laity, and established the dominion of the pope, as king of kings, and lord of lords. This wretch had all the marks of antichrist upon him.

In the twelfth century, so many things ensued to disgrace and corrupt Christianity, that scarcely can we find the slender traces of it remaining, except amongst those who were called heretics. Whosoever would not comply with the will of the popes was immediately persecuted, and put to death, when it could

be done. The priests and monks had so deluded the people, that an incredible superstition and ignorance supplied the place of religion. If any knave or lunatic, male or female, boasted of divine revelations, they were received as the oracles of God. The rulers of the church took a mean advantage of the stupid bigotry of the people, to squeeze money out of them, and to enrich themselves. The popes and bishops got wealth by indulgences, and every religious order had tricks of its own, to carry on the pillaging trade. The scholastics turned Christianity into the art of quibbling and wrangling, and ran into the most intricate and perplexing logical and metaphysical trifles; whilst the mystics, excluding free agency, ascribed all pious dispositions to an irresistible impulse of the Divine Spirit; and instead of setting proper bounds to human reason, absolutely discarded it. The posterity of these fanatics still subsists, and we are unhappily pestered with them.

Till the thirteenth century, the manner of the change in the eucharist was not accounted an article of faith. But then Innocent III. in the council of Lateran, established transubstantiation, both the name and the thing. Our historian

historian Matthew Paris doth justice to the character of this pope, saying that he was the most avaricious and ambitious of all men, and capable of committing any crime that suited his purposes. He caused seventy articles of faith to be read before the council, and commanded the holy fathers to approve them in the lump, and without entering into any examination. Yet the decree which thus established transubstantiation never obtained the force of a law till some time afterwards, and was still contested and rejected by several prelates and doctors.

This was the worthless pope who made our worthless king John surrender to him the kingdoms of England and Ireland, and act only as his deputy and his vassal.

The popes now began to lay their heavy hands upon the revenues of the church, and to fleece the ecclesiastics. The French and the English clergy, who were great sufferers, made loud complaints of these extortions.

This was the century in which papal impudence was at its height, in which the hellish tribunal of the Inquisition was established, in which hanging and burning heretics became the universal practice, being chiefly promoted by

by the ecclesiastics, and by the popes, who declared in formal terms that no faith was to be kept with the heterodox, and no oaths binding upon that occasion.

Thus tyrannical oppressions and false doctrines went hand in hand, and gathered strength till the whole papal system was completed.

What I have remaining to offer concerning the origin and progress of the reformation, must be reserved to another opportunity.

C H A R G E IV.

MAY 9, 1770.

The USE and IMPORTANCE of
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.*My Reverend Brethren,*

IN representing to you the use and importance of ecclesiastical history, I mentioned two points which more particularly require the consideration of the clergy; namely,

The origin and progress of popery:

The origin and progress of the reformation.

Upon the former of these I have given you my thoughts; and shall now proceed to the latter; and so conclude.

The origin of the reformation is commonly ascribed to Luther; though, strictly speaking, he only carried on with great success what others had begun in preceding ages.

Where

Where was your religion before Luther? say the papists to the protestants.

We may reply, it was where yours ought to have been, it was in the Bible.

We may reply, it was in the church of Rome, which though grievously corrupted, yet retained so much of Christianity as to be a true church, distinguished from the Jewish, Pagan, and Mahometan religions, from deism and from atheism.

Because the papists have no charity for us, it is not reasonable that we should have none for them. Great allowances are to be made for ignorance, for want of proper instruction, for the prejudices of education; more especially in the ages which preceded the reformation, and when the truth was not set in so clear a light, as it hath been since.

But a knowledge of ecclesiastical history will furnish us with a more ample and a more particular reply to this insolent cavil.

The attempts towards a reformation were as old as the errors of popery. Not one of those false doctrines ever made its appearance without an opposition, though the opposition proved unsuccessful. However hence it appears that there always were Christians who disapproved

and

and condemned those innovations which we now disapprove and condemn.

When at length the church and see and court of Rome were corrupted to a great degree, and full of abominations, there arose in the Christian world divers persons, who are called by protestant writers, *Testes Veritatis*, The Witnesses of Truth, and who are generally supposed by us to be foretold and described by the *Two Witnesses* in the eleventh chapter of the Revelation, and to be the *Waldenses*, and the *Albigenses*, or *Bobemians*.

As the popes, and prelates, and priests, and monks grew more and more flagitious and insupportable, these opposers of them were multiplied.

Many things therefore concurred from age to age to disturb and shake the papal tyranny, before Luther arose and gave it a still heavier blow.

It is in the eleventh and following centuries that we find in some regions of Europe, particularly in Italy and France, manifest indications of the persons above-mentioned, namely of serious and pious people, who deplored the corrupted state of religion, and the vices of the whole ecclesiastical order, who opposed the

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the exorbitant claims of the popes and prelates, and who, some openly and some secretly, attempted to bring on a reformation. For how rude soever, and illiterate, and ignorant of revealed truths those ages might be, yet those few portions of the gospel which were taught to the common people were sufficient to inform the lowest of them that the religion generally received was not the religion of Jesus Christ, and that he required quite other things from his followers than the popes, bishops, and priests either taught or practised, that they made a vile use of their power and wealth, and that the favour and the blessing of God was not to be obtained by empty ceremonies, by liberal oblations to churches and to priests, by building and endowing monasteries, but by purity of heart, and by a pious and upright behaviour.

But of those who thus undertook the arduous task of healing the inveterate distempers of the church, several were frequently unequal to the attempt, and by shunning one fault, fell into another. They all discerned the corrupted state of the religion commonly received, but few of them were acquainted with the true nature and spirit of the gospel, which will not seem strange to those who duly consider the infelicity of

of the times. Therefore with some opinions which were right they mixed some which were erroneous. Plainly perceiving that most of the enormous crimes of the popes, prelates, priests, and monks, arose from a superfluity of wealth, they thought that ecclesiastics could hardly be too necessitous, and accounted a voluntary poverty to be one of the qualifications of an evangelical teacher. They held the primitive church to be an eternal pattern which the Christian world was strictly obliged to follow even in the minuter points, and the conduct and condition of the apostles to be an invariable rule for the clergy. Being grieved to see the people place the hopes of salvation in certain superstitious ceremonies, and in outward rites, they inculcated the opposite notion, that true religion was only that of the mind, and consisted in a contemplation on divine things; and despised and rejected all external worship, churches, liturgies, doctors, and sacraments.

Consequently, they must have accounted learned studies also to be unnecessary, though without their aid Christian teachers could neither have instructed the people in the true sense of the scriptures, nor have defended Christianity

Christianity against unbelievers, nor have confuted heretical doctrines.

As to ecclesiastical revenues, certain it is that if too much plenty had a tendency to make the clergy slothful and vicious, extreme want and absolute dependency will make them illiterate and contemptible; which these reformers did not consider.

As many of the laity in all times and places are inclined to think that the clergy can hardly be too poor, and that they ought to subsist upon charity, it may not be amiss to mention some of the consequences which would attend this beggarly system.

First, The laity would be disposed to account their donations to be mere acts of spontaneous bounty, which they might grant or withhold. They would overlook the doctrine of St. Paul, who in the days when the teachers could have no settled stipend, represents the oblations of the Christian people not as matter of favour, but of strict due and right.

Secondly, The ministers of the gospel would lie under strong temptations to accommodate themselves to the political or theological opinions or prejudices of the times in which they lived. By popularity they must be maintained,

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and this might incline them to suit their discourses to the taste of the audience against their own judgment, or to be misled themselves and to fall into vulgar errors.

Thirdly, The people would be disposed to think that as they voluntarily paid their Teachers, they ought to choose their Teachers; and this they would be enabled to execute, by starving those whom they did not like. What the consequence of popular elections would be, we know pretty well; namely, that of various candidates, the majority of voters would seldom have the wisdom to make a wise choice.

That the people should elect their own Pastors and their own Bishops, is a system which in speculation may appear plausible; but experience hath shewed it to be pernicious; and History informs us that in ancient times the popular elections of Bishops of Rome caused factions, tumults, violence, bloodshed and murders, to the disgrace of Christianity, and the infamy of the competitors, who instead of being Bishops, did not deserve to be Door-keepers in the House of God.

What did the Monks and Friars contrive, to secure the favour of the people? They nourished the grossest ignorance, and the most despicable

superstition in the populace, stirred them up to rebellion, inflamed them with the spirit of persecution, terrified them with the fire of Purgatory, deluded them with lying miracles, forged records, pretended dreams and visions, and gave them false hopes of salvation to be purchased by liberal donations to the most undeserving persons.

Of all the numerous sects which made their appearance in the twelfth century, none acquired a greater reputation for innocence and probity, by the concessions even of its inhuman persecutors, and none drew together more followers, than that of those people who from their Author were called *Waldenses*.

Petrus Valdensis, a French merchant, and a pious man, caused some parts of the holy Scriptures to be translated from Latin into French, particularly the four Gospels. Upon a perusal of those books, he saw that the religion which the Roman Church propounded to the people was entirely different from that which Christ and his Apostles had taught. Having collected a pious society, he undertook the office of a Teacher. The plain and holy doctrines which these good men professed, the acknowledged innocence of their lives, and that

contempt

contempt which they shewed of riches and honours, caused multitudes of serious and well-disposed Christians to join with them. And thus many congregations of them were formed, first in France, and then in Lombardy, and thence in other parts of Europe, more speedily than could have been imagined; congregations which no persecutions, no punishments, no massacres which they endured with invincible fortitude, could totally extirpate.

What was highly commendable in this Sect, was, that they kept clear of fanaticism, they pretended to no miracles, revelations, or inspirations, and proposed, not to make a new religion, but to retrieve the old one, and to remove Papal abuses and superstitions. In many points they judged rightly. But their discipline was rather too strict and austere. They interpreted Christ's Discourse on the Mount too nearly according to the letter; and they condemned war, lawsuits, riches, usury, that is to say interest, capital punishments and self-defence. And yet in these points they had most of the ancient and eminent Fathers of the Church on their side; so that in this they were no innovators.

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But nothing hurt the Papal cause more than the grand schism of the Antipopes in the fourteenth century, which lasted fifty-one years.

During this remarkable schism, there were freer discourses made in public debates concerning the diabolical wickedness of the Popes, and of their usurpations, than could well have been expected in such ignorant and bigotted times. It is rather strange that after having proceeded so far, they should not have proceeded one step farther, and have discerned that a Pope is no creature of God's making. However, the schism, together with the ignorance, insolence, and abandoned profligacy of the greater part of the Ecclesiastics, had one happy effect. It opened the blind eyes of the Laity, and it prepared the way for the Reformation.

If, as the Papists teach, the holy Catholic Church is a visible society or body of persons professing Christianity, under one visible head, the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of St. Peter, the Deputy and Vicegerent of Jesus Christ here upon earth, with whom whosoever is not in communion, is excluded from the Church in which alone salvation is to be obtained, it seems to follow that the Christian world was in a woful plight for half a century, and that there

there was no Church existing. For instead of having one Head, it had two or three, or in reality none at all. It had two or three pretended Chiefs, notorious Impostors, profligate and perjured villains, as all honest men accounted them, and as they themselves most truly used to call one another. How is this, upon the Popish System, to be reconciled with the perpetuity of the Church, an opinion in which both Papists and Protestants are agreed?

It seems to be a defect in the Papal System that the Church should ever be a monster without a head, which yet happens frequently, and now and then for a considerable time. Therefore when a Pope is made, who is the Emperor of the world, his Successor at the same time should be nominated out of the royal family of the Cardinals, by which means there would be no interregnum, the ecclesiastical throne would never be vacant, and it might be said that the Pope never dies.

In this fourteenth century flourished Wickliffe, the parent of the Lollards, a numerous sect, whose tenets, as far as they are opposite to Popery, were nearly the same with those that are now commonly held by the Protestants. He began the Reformation here, under

Richard the Second, by translating the Bible into English, and by boldly censuring the vices of the Clergy, and by condemning Transubstantiation, and the worship of Saints and of Images.

In this century also arose John Hufs, a man of singular piety, courage, and abilities, the father of the Hussites.

Several of the Divines, who preached at that time at the infamous Council of Constance, represent the Fathers and Ecclesiastics, both within and without doors, with a few exceptions, as a collection of consummate knaves; which their behaviour at that Council fully confirmed, when upon the most frivolous pretences they condemned John Hufs to the flames, though he had the Emperor's safe-conduct, and his companion Jerom of Prague; which was one of the blackest crimes, under the shew of godliness, that the world ever beheld, from the time that our Lord and St. Stephen were murdered in like manner by an Ecclesiastical Council.

The only good which these wretches did was to set their own authority, the authority of General Councils, above that of the Pope; which

which contributed to undermine the absolute dominion of the See of Rome.

The Taborites, disciples of John Huss, and of Jerom of Prague, gave in those days a Confession of Faith, very much in the Protestant style.

Not one eminent writer of that age can be named who did not lament the deplorable state of Christianity. The vices of the Popes, and of the Ecclesiastics in general, were so notorious, that no one dared to reprove such querulous writers or speakers. He was then reckoned to be the best and honestest Preacher who used the greatest liberty in censuring the Court of Rome, the Pope, and all his Supporters.

These things prepared the way for Luther's Reformation, which else could never have succeeded as it did, and have spread itself through the Christian world.

Probably it might have had greater success, if most unhappily the Reformers, the Lutherans and the Calvinists, had not been split into factions and schisms about points of Religion, which in prudence ought to have been left undecided, so far as not to have been made Articles of Faith, and Terms of Christian Com-

munion. But moderation, and toleration, and Christian liberty remained for a long time little understood, even by those who had shaken off the Popish yoke.

Melanchthon seems to have been a mild and good natured man; and yet in a letter to Bullinger, he justifies the burning of Servetus, for heresy, or blasphemy, as he calls it.

Legi quæ de Serveti blasphemiiis respondistis, et pietatem ac judicia vestra probo. Judico etiam Senatum Genevensem recte fecisse, quod hominem pertinacem et non omiffurum blasphemias sustulit. Ac miratus sum esse, qui se veritatem illam improbant.

Of these evils we had our full share; for dissensions arose in the reign of Elizabeth between the Puritans and the Governors of the Church and State, which by scrupulous obstinacy on the one side, and unrelenting tyranny on the other, became incurable.

Divines and other persons suspected of Puritanism were brought before the high Commission and the Star-Chamber Courts, and had the oath *ex officio* tendered to them, to answer all interrogatories. If they refused it, they were sent to jail; if they took it, they were often obliged either to be perjured, or to ac-

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cuse themselves, their wives, their parents, their children, their friends and neighbours. I cannot give such proceedings a softer name than tyranny.

The Popish Bishops, before the Reformation, and even Tostat, the mildest and worthiest of them all, acted thus towards the Lollards, Lutherans, and Gospellers, and made them take this *most unnatural oath*, as Strype * justly calls it. But when our Protestant Bishops kept up the same Inquisition against the Puritans, Strype hath not censured their proceedings; which as an impartial Historian he ought to have done.

We are obliged to Chief-Justice Coke † for condemning this oppressive oath.

“The oath *ex officio*, says Lord Bacon, whereby men are bound to accuse themselves, deserves reformation. To examine a man upon oath, out of the insinuation of fame, or out of accusations secret and undeclared, though it have some countenance from the Civil Law, yet it is so opposite *ex diametro* to the sense and course of Common Law, that it may well receive some limitation.”

* Eccles. Memor. I. 82.

† Burn, Eccl. Law, II. 89.

After

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After Protestantism had taken firm root, the Council of Trent was held in the sixteenth century. These pretended Fathers, and real Children and Tools of the Pope, by their wicked and arbitrary decisions, cut off all possibility of a re-union. The Papists by their intolerable insolence, and cruel behaviour, first to the Greek Churches, and then to the Reformed Churches, have totally alienated the minds of both.

Amongst the Political Ecclesiastics of the Roman Church, their High-priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, there were doubtless many who would gladly have acted the part of Diocletian, and have destroyed the holy Scriptures, from which the Protestants drew their chief arguments against them. But that being impracticable, they took care to destroy the use and efficacy of the Scripture, by representing them as obscure and unintelligible, by reserving to the Church of Rome the sole right of interpreting them, by keeping them as much as it was possible out of the hands of the people, by condemning at different times translations of them into vulgar tongues, and by introducing Tradition, both written and unwritten, as of equal authority with the Word of God.

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The Council of Trent decreed the Authenticity of the Latin Vulgate, and equalled it to the Original Text : and this they did at a time when their Vulgate did not exist ; for it was compiled afterwards.

This decree is either nonsense, or a contradiction in terms. Let them choose which they like best.

If any of the Papists will continue to say, as some of them have said, that by *authentic* they mean that in the Latin Vulgate there are no errors which affect the main of Christianity either in faith or in morals ; that perhaps may be true ; but the same may be as justly said of our English Bible, which yet we do not dignify with the absurd name of Authentic. And yet this is somewhat more than we can well allow them, because their Council of Trent, in fixing the Canon of Scripture, took in the Apocryphal Books, in direct contradiction to Antiquity. Indeed when they thought fit to make new Articles of Faith, it was time to make new Books of Scripture, which now and then might help them to a few sorry arguments in behalf of Popery.

This is the Council, which Philips, at this time of day, hath the assurance to recommend

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mend to us, as an Assembly of Prelates filled with the Holy Ghost, when it is known to all the learned world that they are censured by writers of their own communion, and that France, and Spain, and Germany made loud complaints of their scandalous behaviour.

The Popish Bigots, from our Sanders down to our Philips, in their accounts of the Reformation, have, without the least shame and the slenderest regard to truth, blackened our Reformers, and represented them as the vilest of men, as men equal in wickedness even to their own Popes, of whom Bellarmin and Baronius declare that a long succession went to the Devil, each in his order.

The truth of the case is this; The establishment of Christianity was the work of God; the Reformation of Christianity was the work of men; it was supported by no miraculous gifts. The former was perfect; the latter was imperfect. What was good in it was accomplished by the ministry of industrious, learned, and pious men; what was deficient in it arose from some prejudices, weakneses, and mistakes, from which few of them were entirely exempt; and from the passions and vices of others, who for their

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own worldly ends favoured and countenanced those Reformers.

Henry VIII. a mere Papist in most points, delivered us from the tyranny of the Pope; and demolished the Religious Houses, those public nuisances.

In those days the Clergy took an oath to the Pope, to be his bondslaves, and consequently bad subjects to the King; and then took an oath to the King, which was not reconcileable to the other, and should have made them as bad subjects to the Pope. From this heavy yoke Henry released them.

The wealth of the monasteries and some ecclesiastical estates were scandalously misemployed, both in the time of Henry, and of his son Edward, and even of Elizabeth. King Edward's Court was debauched and profligate, and this most religious young Prince was surrounded with most irreligious servants, who set up as Reformers for the sake of plunder and pillage.

But what is all this to the purpose? and what can the Papists make of it?

God may employ Sinners as well as Saints to carry on the designs of Providence.

Jehu

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Jehu extirpated the worship of Baal out of Israel; yet afterwards proved a bad prince, and took no heed to walk in the law of God.

Joash also reformed the nation, and repaired the Temple; and was in the latter part of his reign an Idolater, and a base murderer of the Prophet Zechariah, to whose father he owed his life and his crown.

Constantine, who delivered the Church from persecution, and established Christianity by law, was a prince who, with his accomplishments, had his faults. If he was not so good as Eusebius makes him, he was not so bad as he is represented by some ancient Pagan and by some modern Christian writers.

Clovis, the first Christian King of France, in whose behalf many miracles were wrought, as the lying records of those times testify, contributed greatly to extirpate Pagan Idolatry, and to establish Christianity in his dominions. But he was, by all accounts, both before and after his conversion, a wicked prince. He retained all the ferocity and barbarity that he had when he was a Pagan. Restless, ambitious, and sanguinary, as most conquerors are, he

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he murdered kings and princes who were his near relations.

So our Henry began the Reformation, though it be impossible to defend his character. Our Protestant historians, in gratitude for the good that he performed, and in opposition to Popish writers, seem to have been rather too favourable to him.

As to the accusation of Sacrilege, which is perpetually flung in our teeth, whosoever will impartially consider the state of the Religious Houses, and the character, the principles, and the behaviour of their inhabitants, at the time of the Reformation, must conclude that to deprive them of their possessions was only to take from them what they had no right to retain. If it was robbery, it was at most only robbing the robbers. They had amassed their wealth by scandalous methods, and they had oppressed and fleeced the Parochial Clergy, who, I will be bold to say, are in all times the most useful members of the Ecclesiastical Body.

Yes; but it will be urged, The last wills and testaments of men ought always to be held sacred. And I say, Not unless they be just, and consistent with the good of civil society.

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The Roman Law, and the Law of Nature too, condemns the *Testamenta Inofficiosa*, by which a man's posterity are disinherited for no sufficient cause.

But as these donations were intended for pious and profitable purposes, it is to be lamented that they were only partly, and not entirely so applied; namely, to the maintenance of the Clergy; the support of literature; the education of youth; the relief of the poor, the aged, and the infirm; and any charitable or national uses. But to bestow those estates upon * Courts, Courtiers, and men of Quality, was to serve neither God nor the World, neither the Church nor the State.

The most plausible reason for the distribution which was made of Ecclesiastic and Monastic estates, is a political one, that thereby the Nobility and Gentry were the more firmly attached to Protestantism, and determined by self-interest to keep out Popery, which, if it returned, would resume those grants. But if all that wealth had been applied to the best purposes, it would have made the Reformation

* Henry wanted to have all the Monasteries suppressed to his own sole use. *Strype, Life of Crammer, p. 72.*

still dearer to the public, and still more venerable in the sight of the world.

It is intolerable insolence in the papists to lay all the tumults, wars, and desolations that ensued to the charge of the protestants, of which they themselves alone were guilty, who began and carried on the persecution with diabolical fury. If some of the reformed, after being for a long time oppressed, pillaged, imprisoned, banished, and hunted down like wild beasts, stood up in their own defence, and chose rather to die like soldiers than like martyrs, who can blame them? Surely not they who have been so famous for seditions, rebellions, assassinations, and massacres.

Their writers assure us that they are now grown much more mild and moderate, and have none of the ferocity and cruelty which was the temper of former times, and that they condemn persecution for a mere diversity of religious sentiments. They may say so; and they must be fools who believe them. It is probable enough that amongst their laity there are several who dislike all sanguinary methods of supporting their religion; but it is because they do not fully understand their own

ecclesiastical system, into the very contexture of which persecution is so closely woven, that nothing can separate it. Upon blood it was built, and by blood it must be supported. Toleration and liberty of conscience would infallibly undermine and destroy it. In this present century, and in our own times, there have been cruel examples of popish intolerance and persecution, sufficient to warn us what we are to expect from them.

To conclude: The papists boast of their superior numbers, and some protestant writers have yielded up that point to them; but, I think, rather too hastily.

Consider the whole body of Christians divided into those who hold communion with the Roman church, and those who dissent from her. Amongst the latter we must not forget to add to the Reformed churches all the Greek churches; for the papists cannot claim the Greeks, whom they are pleased to treat as schismatics and heretics. Then you must throw out all the infidels on both sides; and then we may reasonably claim an equality, not to say a superiority.

We have our infidels indeed, and our infidels have their patrons; but, in proportion to the

the inhabitants, there are more of them in popish countries, according to the opinion of competent judges^d. Infidelity began in the regions of popery, particularly in Italy, and thence hath infected in some measure the reformed nations.

From the repeated attempts of popery the divine Providence hath hitherto preserved us. Thankfulness and a due sense of God's benefits is the only way to secure to us the same protection; as ingratitude, irreligion, and a dissolution of manners may justly bring down his indignation upon a wicked people, and take from them blessings which they neither value nor deserve.

Many celebrated Christian societies have failed and perished long ago; many are so decayed that they seem near to destruction. The seven churches of the Lesser Asia, to which our Lord addresses himself in the Revelation of St. John, are no more to be found. The numerous churches which once flourished on the African coast are now a nest of Mahome-

^d Some person said to the learned Bignon; Rome is the seat of Faith. It is true, replied he; but this Faith is like those people who are never to be found at home.

ran pirates. Other ancient churches are destroyed, together with the cities in which they were established. The Greek churches of the East are in a low condition, both as to spirituals and as to temporals. The church of Rome is corrupted beyond them all. And what security hath our church from undergoing the same fate?

There is indeed no probability that we should relapse into the ancient paganism, the bare memory of which is preserved in ancient authors. That kind of idolatry died many ages ago, and can rise again no more. There is no probability that we should embrace Mahometism, the religion of nations with which we have little or no intercourse, and a religion most groundless and absurd. There is no probability that we should adopt the religion of the dispersed Jews, who are in no condition to make proselytes, and whose religion is by no means alluring. Against popery we ought ever to be upon our guard. Yet it is to be hoped that we shall not return to that ignominious bondage; for popery itself is on the decline; and in these days it hath received deep wounds from the hands of those princes who were

were its best friends and protectors, and it seems to have very few able advocates, if at least we may judge of them by those champions who have lately appeared amongst us, and who have sufficiently exposed themselves and their cause.

But there is an evil of another kind with which we are threatened. The spirit of this age is a spirit of irreligion, which prevails particularly amongst those whose education, fortunes, and stations, ought to have taught them better things. What have we not to fear from the principles and practices of such people?

However, even such people will usually concur to support the public religion of their own country out of mere political and selfish views; just as formerly the great men amongst the Romans kept up the pagan religion, of which they did not believe one tittle.

But our Saviour hath assured us, that his church is founded upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It will subsist in some part or other of the earth, and withstand all opposition, till those brighter times ensue which the prophetic parts of Scripture

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sure give us reason to expect, when the kingdom of Christ shall be in a more flourishing condition, and peace and prosperity shall be the effect and the reward of piety and probity.

F I N I S.

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